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FIRST THINGS

December 1996
Number 68

inconvenient lives
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James Nuechterlein on Editors & Writers
Wolfhart Pannenberg on the Pope
Peter J. Leithart on the Politics of Baptism
Molly Finn on Kathleen Norris
Paul M. Blowers · Gilbert Meilaender
Amy L. Sherman · Mark R. Talbot

redemptive sex at the met
MICHAEL R. LINTON

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Richard John Neuhaus
The Public Square
A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

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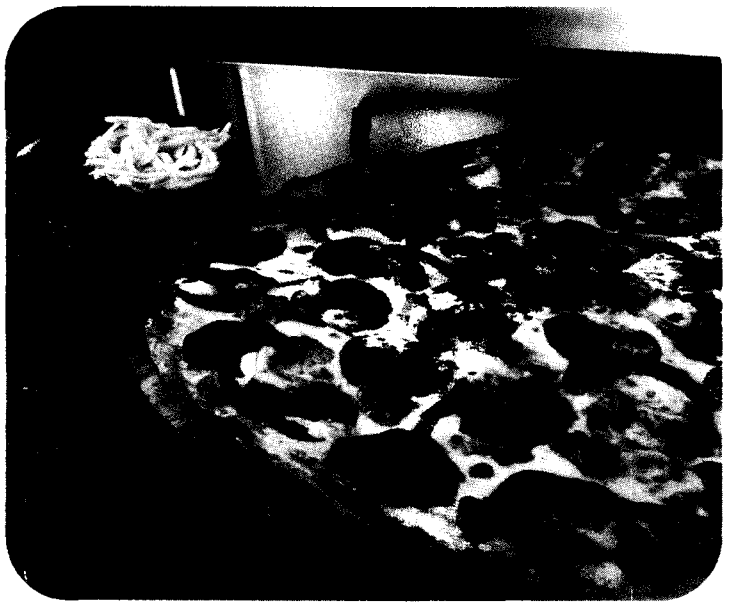

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FIRST THINGS

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Creative Contradictions

Richard John Neuhaus' analysis of Ralph Reed's *Active Faith* ("Ralph Reed's Real Agenda," October) is trenchant, as always. One question, though: is it only "contemporary liberals" who define democracy "in terms of upward mobility rather than self-governance"? By my reckoning, most conservatives tend to define democracy as *both* upward mobility *and* self-governance, seeing no apparent contradiction between the two. But men who govern themselves often will attempt to vote their way upward, as many have noted; our priorities have to be straightened out with the help of the Gospel.

That might be the blind side of American conservatism: the unwillingness to simply assert that it is better to be poor, free, and righteous than rich and beholden to sin. I certainly didn't hear that at the Christian Coalition's Road to Victory convention, although they presumably believe it. I'm a conservative myself, and have been since before I took my religion seriously, but sometimes it's disheartening to see the emphasis placed on wealth, all across our political spectrum. Perhaps this has always been so in America.

Eric M. Johnson
Arlington, VA

Assisted Suicide vs. Abortion

Your editorial on physician-assisted suicide, "The Ninth Circuit's Fatal Overreach" (May) quotes Arthur Caplan: "If anyone thinks they're going to settle anything morally from a court decision, they're nuts." But courts *do* settle moral questions, and have ever since Solomon's decision with that baby. True, I wish they didn't; but who else? Priests? Psychologists? Newspaper columnists?

The "right" to die is inalienable. It is a decision for the individual, and it is a decision that fights every natural imperative to stay alive. Whatever compels an individual to overcome all those imperatives must matter to him very much indeed. It would appear extremely doubtful that any presumed "duty" to die could succeed in overcoming those imperatives.

Abortion, on the other hand, takes away from an individual the "right" to life. That is also inalienable. The victim of abortion hasn't the opportunity to elect to live or die and society should protect him.

Robert C. Rhodes
Queens Village, NY

Theological Glass Houses

Forgive me for criticizing a fellow Presbyterian—particularly when what motivates me to write is his criticism of fellow Christians. I have read and reread Peter J. Leithart's essay "What's Wrong with Evangelical Theology?" (August/September), and I am still not sure what his point is. It seems mostly like an intellectual exercise composed with the aid of "The Do-It-Yourself Guide to Theological Erudition" (FT, November 1995). He seems to hold evangelicals in contempt for their inability to define themselves theologically.

It seems to me that we Presbyterians should be careful about throwing rocks when we are in the proverbial glass house. I would offer Mr. Leithart's article as Exhibit A of an attitude that has contributed to the precipitous fall in Presbyterian Church membership (while evangelical churches have continued to win souls to Christ and to grow and prosper). Faith in God is primarily intuitive, not logical, rational, and intellectual.

Mr. Leithart's sneering put-down of "nineteenth-century revival hymns with their sentimental lyrics set to syrupy melodies" is offensive. There is a more powerful sermon in most of these favorite old hymns than is heard from the pulpit of most churches. . . .

William C. Parish
Charlotte, NC

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This Time

Editor's Notes

James Nuechterlein

Like coyotes and roadrunners, writers and editors are natural enemies. Writers suspect that all editors are misanthropes who compensate for their crabbed lives and creative frustrations by exercising petty tyranny over the efforts of their literary betters. Editors, for their part, regard most writers as paranoid egomaniacs ungrateful for the selfless efforts that extract a modicum of literacy and coherence from unpromising texts. As a skillful and sensitive editor whose own limpid prose has often fallen victim to editorial butchers, I understand the grievances of both.

Actually, that statement is greatly exaggerated—at least the part about the treatment of my own writing. For the most part, my experience with editors has been positive. That's because the journal for which I have written most extensively over the years is *Commentary*, and the editors I dealt with there, Norman Podhoretz and Neal Kozodoy, both combined exacting standards for clarity with a minimum of the occupational tendency to fussiness.

When they changed something, it was because it needed changing. Neal once entirely rewrote the lead of a book review of mine for the very good reason that I hadn't been able to make up my mind about the book and had written an introductory paragraph that was both equivocal and awkward. On another occasion, Norman suggested that I remove a couple of paragraphs from an essay because they interrupted the flow of my argument. I pleaded that they should be kept—couldn't he see that every word was a gem?—and he reluctantly acquiesced. Rereading the essay some time later, I saw he had been right. Most of the time, *Commentary* published my pieces pretty much as I wrote them, which accounts, no doubt, for my high opinion of the journal's editorial practices. (Joseph Epstein recounts his similarly happy experiences as a writer for *Commentary* in the September 30, 1996 edition of the *Weekly Standard*.)

Not all editors, of course, are up to the standards of Norman Podhoretz and Neal Kozodoy. I've had my share of unpleasant experiences with ignorant and overzealous editors. An assistant editor of an obscure academic journal rewrote every other sentence of an exhaustively researched (and numbingly dull) article I wrote on fair employment legislation during World War II. Indeed, he was so enthusiastic in his editing that he recast a good many of the direct quotations I had included from congressional debates. When I pointed this out, his senior editor was so chagrined that he gave me back most of my own sentences as well.

Then there was the journal that reprinted an essay on radical historians that I had published in *Commentary*. In the single most incompetent piece of editing I have ever encountered, the journal—which did not send me proofs ahead of time—introduced into the reprint literally dozens of misspellings (beginning with my name), grammatical errors, and jumbled sentences. Anyone reading the article who had not seen the original essay in *Commentary* could only have concluded that I was a subliterate idiot.

All editors have idiosyncratic preferences and antipathies. Joseph Epstein, the distinguished editor of the *American Scholar*, admits in his *Weekly Standard* essay to a number of "tics, quirks, and downright prejudices," among which is an intense dislike of the word "intriguing." I know, because he struck that word from the article I wrote for him on my experiences at Valparaiso University. I admire Mr. Epstein as both writer and editor, but I find it intriguing that he should have such an irrational prejudice against a perfectly good English word.

My own career as editor began relatively late. In 1981, after I had been teaching in Canada for seventeen years, my undergraduate institution Valparaiso University invited me back to edit the *Cresset*, its monthly review of literature, the arts, and public affairs. I wasn't, to tell the truth, all that interested in editing, but I did want to return to the U.S. and alma mater, so I jumped at the chance. It was only gradually that I discovered that the move from classroom to editor's chair was, for me, a felicitous one. Better grappling with grownups' essays than undergraduates' term papers.

Editing the *Cresset* was an enjoyable, if sometimes anxiety-filled, experience. Because I was a staff of one, I had total editorial independence. For the same reason, I had very limited resources. Which meant, among other things, that authors saw their proofs only if I had done very heavy editing (i.e., total rewrites). Other than that, writers had to trust me. It was not an ideal circumstance, but it instilled in me a healthy instinct not to edit more than necessary—though "necessary" is here a term subject to debate—and at all times to attend carefully to the author's intended meaning (however inscrutable that might be). In retrospect, I am amazed and gratified that so few *Cresset* contributors complained of my ministrations, though I recognize that there may be legions of them nursing deep silent grudges to this day.

I have tried to carry the habits developed at the *Cresset* to the quite difference circumstances of First Things, where I have far more in the way of resources—if, alas, less godlike authority. Editing is like writing in that, while it can be improved with

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practice, one either has a knack for it or one does not. For several years I had the great good fortune to work with a master editor, Midge Decter. She wasn't on the masthead—her official title was Distinguished Fellow of the Institute—but she was in practice until her retirement last year FT's chief copy editor. She didn't impose her own marvelous style on the writers she edited, but she did wonders fixing their logic, structure, grammar, and syntax.

The trick of editing is to rescue writers from their errors and infelicities without robbing them of their individuality or substituting one's own voice for theirs. Good writing comes in a variety of forms, and journals whose contributors all sound alike could do with some editorial lightening up. As with judges, one wants from editors a certain self-restraint, and my principle—if perhaps not always my practice—is that on close calls writers should get the benefit of the doubt.

The major problem in editing a journal of ideas like First Things is that most of our contributors are academics, and many academics, not to put too fine a point on it, write barbaric prose. Graduate education ruins writers under the guise of inducting them into the academic priesthood. Academics are taught to write for other academics, which means adopting a particular discipline's distinctive language. The result, often even in the humanities, is that scholars communicate in a needlessly opaque jargon decipherable only to those who have mastered the code of the club. It's the equivalent of a secret handshake.

Most academics welcome efforts to make their prose more accessible. Some, however, suspect that to translate Academese into standard English is to dumb it down. A few genuinely seem to prefer obscurity and to confuse it with profundity.

Editors have a self-effacing vocation. Much of the most important work they do—the articles they reject, the prose in accepted articles that they bring to high polish (or at least to intelligibility)—is known to but a few. Theirs is a hidden glory.

My colleague Richard John Neuhaus tells my favorite editor story. Years ago at a different journal (now defunct) he drew the assignment of editing the manuscript of a friend who was also a very distinguished scholar (now deceased). The distinguished scholar was, unfortunately, not much of a stylist. RJN labored at considerable length to bring order and clarity to the ungainly manuscript. When, some weeks later, the article was published, the distinguished scholar remarked to RJN how pleased he was to see it in print. "And you know," he added, "if I do say so myself, I had forgotten how well-written it was."

No editor could hear sweeter words. FT

Leo the Great on the Coming of the Christ Child. Those who murmur about the dispensations of God . . . talk as if that which has come to pass in the last age of the world had no bearing on the times that are past. But the Incarnation of the Word produced its effects not only after but also before its realization in time, and the mystery of man's salvation was never, in any age of antiquity, at a standstill. What the Apostles preached had been foretold by the prophets, nor did fulfillment come too late for that which had always been believed. . . . For thus what was foretold by many signs, by many voices, by many mysteries, throughout so many ages, would not be doubtful in these days of the Gospel; and the birth of our Savior, which surpasses not only all other miracles but also the very grasp of human thought, would work in us a firmer faith precisely because it had been preached so frequently and so long ago. It was therefore by no new design, by no tardy mercy that God took thought for man, but from the foundation of the world he ordained one and the same cause of salvation for all. . . . This mystery of God's great love, which today fills the whole earth, was so powerful in its types and prophecies that those who believed in its promise received no less than those who witnessed its fulfillment.

—*Third Sermon for Christmas* (c. 440)

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Opinion

The Politics of Baptism

Peter J. Leithart

In the second chapter of his letter to the Galatians, Paul recounts how on a visit to Antioch he publicly rebuked Peter's "hypocrisy" in withdrawing, under pressure from a delegation of the Jerusalem church, from table fellowship with Gentile believers. The New Testament scholar James D. G. Dunn contends that for Paul this event resulted in a decisive break with the church that had sponsored his original missionary journey. Significantly too, it was in this context—as an answer to the social problem of relations between the circumcised and the uncircumcised in the church and not as a solution to individual guilt and fear of judgment—that Paul first wrote the formula, "justification by faith and not by the works of the law" (Galatians 2:16). Dunn concludes, "The Antioch incident was probably one of the most significant events in the development of earliest Christianity. It shaped the future of Paul's missionary work, it sparked off a crucial insight which became one of the central emphases in Paul's subsequent teaching, and consequently it determined the whole character and future of that young movement which we now call Christianity."

It is a large claim, but Dunn actually *underestimates* how widely Paul's stinging rebuke reverberated, for its echoes produced an earthquake that finally left the ancient world in ruins. Toward the end of *Economy and Society*, Max Weber cites Galatians 2 and Peter's participation in ritual meals with Gentiles to highlight the differences between the antique and the medieval cities. Ancient cities, Weber notes, were socially structured by a separation between those who made a claim of descent from the founding clans (patricians) and those who could make no such claim (plebeians), a separation often spatially represented by the isolation of plebeians either at the foot of the sacred hill of the polis or in ghettos clustered at the walls.

This dualism of the ancient city had a definite religious coloring, since the distinction of patricians and plebeians was equivalent to that between those who had access to the *sancta* and those who did not. As Henri Fustel de Coulange has shown, the polis was a religious as much as a political entity; rights came by participation in the city's rites. Weber observes, "The cities of Antiquity were religiously exclusive not only toward the outside, but also internally against everyone who did not belong to one of the constituted sibs—that is, against the plebeians, and for this reason they remained compartmentalized into initially very exclusive associations."

By late antiquity, this caste system had already declined, and Pierre-Simon Ballanche has argued that the history of antiquity is the story of an ultimately successful plebeian struggle for initiation into political, cultural, and religious privilege. It was, as Weber and Ballanche agree, in medieval Christendom that the religious exclusions lost their political centrality. Weber cites the Antioch incident as an example of the fading of religiously based political exclusiveness. Later, Southern European cities, with their Capulet-Montague feuding, more closely resembled ancient cities than did those of Northern Europe. But even in Italy social and political boundaries, under the impact of Christianity, were stripped of much of their religious legitimation.

The medieval city, for all its real inequities and flaws, was a partial realization of a social order ritually imagined in Christian baptism. Baptism, as the church fathers, early medieval theologians, and scholastics consistently noted, confers a participation in the priesthood of *the* Priest, Jesus Christ. In contrast with the Old Testament priesthood, which was confined to the descendants of Aaron, the Christian priesthood encompasses the whole people of God. All the marks of induction into the Aaronic priesthood—anointing, investiture, participation in the sacrificial meal—were included in Christian initiation. Certainly no one denied the necessity of an ordained ministry in the church, but at the same time liturgists insisted that the *dignitas* of priesthood was conferred by baptism and its accompaniments.

While theologians normally elaborated the priesthood of the faithful by typological contrast with the priesthood of the Mosaic order, baptism held similarly revolutionary implications for the order of the Greek and Roman world. Fustel de Coulanges notes, "What manifestly separated the plebeian from patrician was that the plebeian had no part in the religion of the city. It was impossible for him to fill the priestly office." Christian baptism as baptism into priesthood ended all that. Baptismal water was the universal solvent not only of traditional religious distinctions within Judaism but also of the foundation stones on which the ancient city rested; for the church, it was the *sole* initiation and was not confined to a single family, clan, race, or social class. Everyone within the watery walls of *this* city participates in the rites and shares in the *sancta*; holy things are for holy people, but *all* the

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baptized are saints.

Politically, the democratic implications of eliminating ancient religious exclusions are obvious; less evident but no less spectacular were the economic consequences. Instead of subordinating artisans and entrepreneurs to the founding aristocracy, as the ancient city had done, the medieval city was ruled by a combination of grand bourgeoisie and small capitalists. Here, it seems, Weber put his finger on a stronger connection between Protestantism and capitalism than his flawed conjectures about election and the Protestant work ethic.

It was in Protestantism that the radical implications of Christian baptism were most dramatically worked out in opposition to a late medieval system that had hardened the division of priesthood and laity. Catholic apologist Joannis Moldonati, polemicizing against the Lutherans, actually defended the distinction between priest and laity by appealing to analogies with ancient Rome's patricians and plebeians, perpetuating in ecclesial guise the structures of antiquity. Meanwhile, Luther was blanketing Europe with tracts announcing, with an oddly traditional recklessness or reckless traditionalism, that every baptized Christian was priest and cleric, thereby sparking liberation from a captivity that began, almost literally, in Babylon. It is surely no accident that renewed Catholic attention to the priesthood of the laity has in our century been followed by an unprecedented Catholic endorsement of the free economy. To put it simply: No Congar, No Novak.

Paul's insistence that Jew and Greek share a common table was the symbolic founding of the Western city. Over the modern megapolis, over its indifferent financial districts and bustling marketplaces, flutters a banner so defaced as to be all but illegible and so ignored as to be all but forgotten, but once inscribed with another stirring passage from Paul's letter to the Galatians (3:27-28): "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

PETER J. LEITHART, *a Presbyterian minister from Alabaster, Alabama, is now working on a Ph.D. in theology at Cambridge University.*

Coming in January ...

Responses to the November Symposium,

"The End of Democracy?
The Judicial Usurpation of Politics"

The Pope in Germany

Wolfhart Pannenberg

This was the third pastoral visit of John Paul II to Germany. When he first came in 1980, the ecumenical question moved to a place of prominence, and continues there today. A little background may be helpful. In 1980 the Pope met at Mainz with a number of Protestant bishops—including the leading bishop of the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD), Eduard Lohse—who pressed him on the urgency of alleviating ecumenical tensions in the land where the Reformation began and where the population is now almost evenly divided between Protestants and Catholics. Lohse specifically urged ecumenical worship on Sundays, shared pastoral care for people in confessionally mixed marriages, and joint hospitality at the eucharist. Because of the number of people involved in mixed marriages, the second issue was then and is now particularly important.

The Pope agreed to the creation of a commission, composed of bishops from both confessions, to study ways toward such ecumenical progress. In its first meeting, the commission concluded that a precondition for further ecumenical convergence is the removal of the mutual condemnations of the sixteenth century. A group of Catholic and Protestant theologians was asked to examine the extent to which those condemnations are still applicable. (The results of that five-year study are found in *The Condemnations of the Reformation Era: Do They Still Divide?*, edited by Karl Lehmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg, Fortress Press—*Eds.*)

When in 1987 the Pope visited Germany for the second time, the results of that study had been submitted to the joint bishops commission, and the commission recommended that the churches act on the study's conclusion that the remaining doctrinal differences no longer justify mutual condemnation. In an important speech at Augsburg, the site of the evangelical confession of 1530 that took its name from that city, John Paul declared that the churches must take concrete steps on the basis of the study's conclusion. Leaving Germany in 1987, he said ecumenical progress should be faster—although not too fast.

Whatever complaints there may be about this pope on other questions, there is no doubt that he has demonstrated a deep and unprecedented commitment to Christian unity. He has relentlessly pressed for the restoration of ecclesial communion

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with the Orthodox Church, indicating his hope that that may be achieved in his pontificate, or at least that the course toward restoration will be irreversibly set. He has also assiduously nurtured dialogue with Protestants, notably with Anglicans (although he has made no secret of his disappointment with their unilateral decision to ordain women to the priesthood). And he has supported the steps toward removing the mutual condemnations of the sixteenth century. Yet it has not escaped the attention of Protestants that in his 1995 encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* John Paul emphasized reconciliation with the Orthodox East and seemed to downplay ecumenical progress made with Protestants since Vatican Council II. The encyclical did not encourage high ecumenical expectations among Germans awaiting his third visit.

Hopes for the visit were also dampened by other factors. In recent years, many Roman Catholics in Germany have expressed increasing unhappiness with a number of papal actions. Widespread admiration for the Pope has been reduced by the way he appointed a number of bishops in apparent disregard of the feelings of local clergy and laity. This was most dramatically the case in Cologne, fueling the sense that papal authority was exercised in a heavy-handed manner. As elsewhere, there is in Germany continuing unrest with the Church's positions on birth control and aspects of sexual morality. In addition, the recent and unequivocal exclusion of the possibility of ordaining women has not been well received. More important to this general climate of discontent, however, is the continued exclusion of divorced persons from the sacraments, and this pontificate's adamant insistence on celibacy for priests, even as the number of candidates for priesthood declines.

Nonetheless, when the Pope arrived on June 21, he was received with respect and admiration by the great majority of Germans, Protestant and Catholic. Commentators remarked on his personal presence that bespeaks a complete devotion to the service of Christ and challenges the presuppositions of a secular world. At Paderborn, the first city of the visit, Catholic dissenters had prepared an ambitious program of protest, but their efforts were entirely eclipsed by the presence of the Pope.

It was different in Berlin, but mainly for reasons quite accidental. It happened that the Pope's visit coincided with a huge lesbian and homosexual festival that had attracted participants from all over. These revelers, joined by the activists of the sundry leftisms centered in Berlin, booed, hissed, and engaged in general persiflage during the Pope's visit, in the company of Chancellor Helmut Kohl, to the Brandenburg Gate. Some paraded in the nude, and a few managed to get close enough to splatter the "popemobile" with red paint.

The protest, unfortunately, dominated much of the international press attention to the Pope's visit. In no way, however, was this isolated event a reflection of the German response to the Pope. In fact, the Catholic archbishop of Berlin indicated his pleased surprise that the protest was much smaller than many had expected. Also in Berlin, the great celebration at the Olympic Stadium that witnessed the beatification of Karl Leisner and Bernhard Lichtenberg came off splendidly. And even at the Brandenburg Gate, the protest did not diminish the power of John Paul's Christian witness as he declared, "Freedom has a name: Jesus Christ!"

At Paderborn the Pope participated in an ecumenical service at which both he and the leading Lutheran bishop, Horst Hirschler, preached. Noting that this is the 450th anniversary of Martin Luther's death, the Pope said that today Luther is better understood and the Catholic Church can do him more justice than it did in his day. Acknowledging Luther's sometime violent temper, John Paul deplored the fact that Rome had not appreciated what was legitimate in his intentions, and noted that his predecessor Hadrian VI (1522-23) had said as much. "We all became guilty," the Pope declared.

Nonetheless, some Protestants complained that he did not formally revoke the excommunication of Luther. There had been rumors before the visit that he wanted to do that but had been dissuaded by his advisors. In response to this question on other occasions, John Paul has noted that an excommunication holds only during a person's lifetime, and Luther's case has long since been submitted to a higher tribunal, the final judgment of God. In any event, the logically prior ecumenical step is the removal of the Council of Trent's condemnations of Reformation doctrine.

The Pope repeatedly addressed that issue. In the Paderborn sermon he called the overcoming of divisions among the churches one of the "pastoral priorities" of his pontificate, and underscored the importance of Christian unity to the great task of reevangelizing society. He referred appreciatively to the study on the sixteenth-century condemnations, and emphasized that its results have significance far beyond the German situation. Meeting with Protestant leaders in Paderborn, he strongly affirmed the "fundamental agreement" that has been reached on the doctrine of justification, traditionally understood to be the doctrinal keystone of the Reformation.

I believe that, at this point, one cannot reasonably have expected the Pope to go further than he did, especially in view of the fact that in 1994 the German Lutheran synod gave only a lukewarm response to the results of the condemnations study. At Paderborn, however, the presiding bishop of the EKD, Klaus Engelhardt, told the Pope that the Protestant churches no longer hold to the sixteenth-century condemnations of Rome, and he unambiguously declared his

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support for the 1994 request of the German Catholic bishops conference that Rome declare the condemnations of Reformation doctrine to be obsolete.

The visit of John Paul to Germany did not, then, produce an official declaration on the question of the condemnations. One may reasonably believe, however, that it helped clear the way toward that end. In the context of the ongoing ecumenical task, the Pope's visit must be declared a success. Moreover, a pastoral visit by the Pope is about more than ecumenism, as important as that is. In the public culture, the visit left a still resounding sense of the power of Christian witness in a society that thinks of itself as increasingly secular but is also marked by a confused yearning for the truth that has a name: Jesus Christ.

WOLFHART PANNENBERG, *who recently retired as Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Munich, is the founding director of the Institute of Ecumenical Theology.*

The Third Day of Christmas

Out of the mouths of Holy Innocents
the wailings of our weakness,
our Herod knees bent now
the better to hear their screams,

the better to swallow
the words we've wallowed in,
the tug-and-pull of the womb
across the clinic's lintel.

In Rama there is weeping,
in Charleston, in Bismarck,
in Portland, in Trenton,
in Pittsburgh, in New Orleans,
in Santa Rosa, in the thin sac that holds us
from heaven. There is weeping

for the waste we so covetously cradle
as our rights, that we so vehemently sing
as the holy holly bough is breaking.

—Marjorie Maddox

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Inconvenient Lives

Robert H. Bork

Judging from the evidence, Americans do not view human life as sacrosanct. We engage in a variety of activities, from driving automobiles to constructing buildings, that we know will cause deaths. But the deliberate taking of the life of an individual has never been regarded as a matter of moral indifference. We debate the death penalty, for example, endlessly. It seems an anomaly, therefore, that we have so easily accepted practices that are the deliberate taking of identifiable individual lives. We have turned abortion into a constitutional right; one state has made assisted suicide a statutory right and two federal circuit courts, not to be outdone, have made it a constitutional right; campaigns to legalize euthanasia are underway. It is entirely predictable that many of the elderly, ill, and infirm will be killed, and often without their consent. This is where radical individualism has taken us.

When a society revises its attitude toward life and death, we can see the direction of its moral movement. The revision of American thought and practice about life questions began with abortion, and examination of the moral confusion attending that issue helps us understand more general developments in public morality.

The necessity for reflection about abortion does not depend on, but is certainly made dramatic by, the fact that there are approximately a million and a half abortions annually in the United States. To put it another way, since the Supreme Court's 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade*, there have been perhaps over thirty million abortions in the United States. Three out of ten conceptions today end in the destruction of the fetus. These facts, standing alone, do not decide the issue of morality, but they do mean that the issue is hugely significant.

The issue is also heated, polarizing, and often debated on both sides in angry, moralistic terms. I will refrain from such rhetoric because for most of my life I held a position on the subject very different from the one I now take. For years I adopted, without bothering to think, the attitude common among secular, affluent, university-educated people who took the propriety of abortion for granted, even when it was illegal. The practice's illegality, like that of drinking alcohol during Prohibition, was thought to reflect merely unenlightened prejudice or religious conviction, the two being regarded as much the same. From time to time, someone would say that it was a difficult moral problem, but there was rarely any doubt how the problem should be resolved. I remember a woman at Yale saying, without any disagreement from those around her, that "The fetus isn't nothing, but I am for the mother's right to abort it." I probably nodded. Most of us had a vague and unexamined notion that while the fetus wasn't nothing, it was also not fully human.* The slightest reflection would have suggested that non-human or semi-human blobs of tissue do not magically turn into human beings.

Qualms about abortion began to arise when I first read about fetal pain. There is no doubt that, after its nervous system has developed to a degree, the fetus

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* I objected to *Roe* v. *Wade* the moment it was decided, not because of any doubts about abortion, but because the decision was a radical deformation of the Constitution. The Constitution has nothing to say about abortion, leaving it, like most subjects, to the judgment and moral sense of the American people and their elected representatives. *Roe* and the decisions reaffirming it are equal in their audacity and abuse of judicial office to *Dred Scott* v. *Sandford.* Just as *Dred Scott* forced a southern proslavery position on the nation, *Roe* is nothing more than the Supreme Court's imposition of the morality of our cultural elites.

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being dismembered or poisoned in the womb feels excruciating pain. For that reason, many people would confine abortion to the early stages of pregnancy but have no objection to it then. There are, on the other hand, people who oppose abortion at any stage and those who regard it as a right at any stage up to the moment of birth. But in thinking about abortion—especially abortion at any stage—it is necessary to address two questions. Is abortion always the killing of a human being? If it is, is that killing done simply for convenience? I think there can be no doubt that the answer to the first question is, yes; and the answer to the second is, almost always.*

The question of whether abortion is the termination of a human life is a relatively simple one. It has been described as a question requiring no more than a knowledge of high school biology. There may be doubt that high school biology courses are clear on the subject these days, but consider what we know. The male sperm and the female egg each contains twenty-three chromosomes. Upon fertilization, a single cell results containing forty-six chromosomes, which is what all humans have, including, of course, the mother and the father. But the new organism's forty-six chromosomes are in a different combination from those of either parent; the new organism is unique. It is not an organ of the mother's body but a different individual. This cell produces specifically human proteins and enzymes from the beginning. Its chromosomes will heavily influence its destiny until the day of its death, whether that death is at the age of ninety or one month after conception.

The cell will multiply and develop, in accordance with its individual chromosomes, and, when it enters the world, will be recognizably a human baby. From single-cell fertilized egg to baby to teenager to adult to old age to death is a single process of one individual, not a series of different individuals replacing each other. It is impossible to draw a line anywhere after the moment of fertilization and say before this point the creature is not human but after this point it is. It has all the attributes of a human from the beginning, and those attributes were in the forty-six chromosomes with which it began. Francis Crick, the Nobel laureate and biophysicist, is quoted as having estimated that "the amount of information contained in the chromosomes of a single fertilized human egg is equivalent to about a thousand printed volumes of books, each as large as a volume of the Encyclopedia Britannica." Such a creature is not a blob of tissue or, as the *Roe* opinion so felicitously put it, a "potential life." As someone has said, it is a life with potential.

It is impossible to say that the killing of the organism at any moment after it originated is not the killing of a human being. Yet there are those who say just that by redefining what a human being is. Redefining what it means to be a human being will prove dangerous in contexts other than abortion. One of the more primitive arguments put forward is that in the embryonic stage, which lasts about two months after conception, the creature does not look human. One man said to me, "Have you ever seen an embryo? It looks like a guppy." A writer whose work I greatly respect refers to "the patently inhuman fetus of four weeks." A cartoonist made fun of a well-known anti-abortion doctor by showing him pointing to the microscopic dot that is the zygote and saying, "We'll call him Timmy." It is difficult to know what the appearance of Timmy has to do with the humanity of the fetus. I suspect appearance is made an issue because the more recognizably a baby the fetus becomes, the more our emotions reject the idea of destroying it. But those are uninstructed emotions, not emotions based on a recognition of what the fetus is from the beginning.

Other common arguments are that the embryo or fetus is not fully sentient, or that it cannot live outside the mother's womb, or that the fetus is not fully a person unless it is valued by its mother. These seem utterly insubstantial arguments. A newborn is not fully sentient, nor is a person in an advanced stage of Alzheimer's disease. There are people who would allow the killing of the newborn and the senile, but I doubt that is a view with general acceptance. At least not yet. Equally irrelevant to the discussion is the fact that the fetus cannot survive outside the womb. Neither can a baby survive without the nurture of others, usually the parents. Why dependency, which lasts for years after birth, should justify terminating life is inexplicable. No more apparent is the logic of the statement that a fetus is a person only if the mother values its life. That is a tautology: an abortion is justified if the mother wants an abortion.

In discussing abortion, James Q. Wilson wrote, "The moral debate over abortion centers on the point in the development of the fertilized ovum when it has acquired those characteristics that entitle it to moral respect." He did not, apparently, think the cell resulting from conception was so entitled. Wilson gave an example of moral respect persisting in difficult circumstances: "An elderly man who has been a devoted husband and father but who now lies comatose in a vegetative state barely seems to be alive, . . . yet we experience great moral anguish in deciding whether to withdraw his life support." In response, my wife was moved to observe, "But suppose the doctor told

* In discussing abortion I will not address instances where most people, however they might ultimately decide the issue, would feel genuine moral anguish, cases, for example, where it is known that the child will be born with severe deformities. My purpose is not to solve all moral issues but simply to address the major ones. Abortions in cases of deformity, etc., are a very small fraction of the total and, because they introduce special factors, do not cast light on the direction of our culture as do abortions of healthy pre-borns performed for convenience.

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us that in eight months the man would recover, be fully human, and live a normal life as a unique individual. Is it even conceivable that we would remove his life-support system on the ground that his existence, like that of the fetus, is highly inconvenient to us and that he does not look human at the moment? There would be no moral anguish but instead a certainty that such an act would be a grave moral wrong."

It is certainly more likely that we would refuse to countenance an abortion if a sonogram showed a recognizable human being than if only a tiny, guppy-like being appeared. But that is an instinctive reaction and instinctive reactions are not always the best guide to moral choice. Intellect must play a role as well. What if biology convinces us that the guppy-like creature or the microscopic fertilized egg has exactly the same future, the same capacity to live a full human life, as does the fetus at three months or at seven months or the infant at birth? "It is difficult to see," my wife added, "that the decision in the imagined case of the comatose elderly man who in time will recover is different from the abortion decision." In both cases, it is only a matter of time. The difference is that the death of the elderly man would deprive him of a few years of life while the aborted embryo or fetus loses an entire lifetime.

The issue is not, I think, one of appearance, sentience, or anything other than prospective life that is denied the individual by abortion. In introductory ethics courses, there used to be a question put: If you could obtain a hundred million dollars by pressing a button that would kill an elderly Chinese mandarin whom you had never seen, and if nobody would know what you had done, would you press the button? That seems to me the same issue as the abortion decision, except that the unborn child has a great deal longer to live if you don't press that particular button. Most of us, I suspect, would like to think we would not kill the mandarin. The characteristics of appearance, sentience, ability to live without assistance, and being valued by others cannot be the characteristics that entitle you to sufficient moral respect to be allowed to go on living. What characteristic does, then? It must lie in the fact that you are alive with the prospect of years of life ahead. That characteristic the unborn child has.

That seems to me an adequate ground to reject the argument made by Peter Singer last year in the London *Spectator* that supports not only abortion but infanticide. He writes that it is doubtful that a fetus becomes conscious until well after the time most abortions are performed and even if it is conscious, that would not put the fetus at a level of awareness comparable to that of "a dog, let alone a chimpanzee. If on the other hand it is self-awareness, rather than mere consciousness, that grounds a right to life, that does not arise in a human being until some time after birth."

Aware that this line leaves out of account the potential of the child for a full human life, Singer responds that "in a world that is already over-populated, and in which the regulation of fertility is universally accepted, the argument that we should bring all potential people into existence is not persuasive." That is disingenuous. If overpopulation were a fact, that would hardly justify killing humans. If overpopulation were taken to be a justification, it would allow the killing of any helpless population, preferably without the infliction of pain.

Most contraceptive methods of regulating fertility do not raise the same moral issue as abortion because they do not permit the joining of the sperm and the egg. Until the sperm and the egg unite, there is no human being. Singer goes on to make the unsubstantiated claim that "just as the human being develops gradually in a physical sense, so too does its moral significance gradually increase." That contention is closely allied to the physical appearance argument and is subject to the same rebuttal. One wonders at measuring moral significance by physique. If a person gradually degenerated physically, would his moral significance gradually decline?

Many who favor the abortion right understand that humans are being killed. Certainly the doctors who perform and nurses who assist at abortions know that. So do nonprofessionals. Otherwise, abortion would not be smothered in euphemisms. Thus, we hear the language of "choice," "reproductive rights," and "medical procedures." Those are oddly inadequate terms to describe the right to end the life of a human being. It has been remarked that "pro-choice" is an odd term since the individual whose life is at stake has no choice in the matter. These are ways of talking around the point that hide the truth from others and, perhaps, from one's self. President Clinton speaks of keeping abortion "safe, legal, and rare." Why rare, if it is merely a choice, a medical procedure without moral problems?

That there are severe moral problems is becoming clear even to many who favor abortion. That is probably why, as Candace C. Crandall observed last year in the *Women's Quarterly*, "the morale of the pro-choice side of the abortion stalemate has visibly collapsed." The reason: "Proponents of abortion rights overcame Americans' qualms about the procedure with a long series of claims about the benefits of unrestricted abortion on demand. Without exception, those claims have proved false." The proponents claimed that *Roe v. Wade* rescued women from death during unsafe, back-alley abortions, but it was the availability of antibiotics beginning in the 1940s and improved medical techniques that made abortion safe well before *Roe*. It was argued that abortion on demand would guarantee that every child was a wanted child, would keep children from being born into poverty, reduce illegitimacy rates, and help end

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child abuse. Child poverty rates, illegitimacy rates, and child abuse have all soared. We heard that abortion should be a decision between a woman and her doctor. The idea of a woman and her personal physician deliberating about the choice is a fantasy: women are going to specialized abortion clinics that offer little support or counseling. (Crandall does not address the point, but it is difficult to see that bringing a doctor in for consultation would change the nature of the decision about taking human life.) She does note, however, that many women use abortion for birth control.

Crandall says she sympathizes with abortion-rights advocates. But on her own showing, it is difficult to see why. No anti-abortion advocate could make it clearer that human lives are being destroyed at the rate of 1.5 million a year for convenience.

The author Naomi Wolf, who favors the right to abort, has challenged the feminists whose rhetoric seeks to disguise the truth that a human being is killed by abortion. In a 1995 article in the *New Republic*, she asks for "an abortion-rights movement willing publicly to mourn the evil—necessary evil though it may be—that is abortion." But she asks a question and gives an answer about her support for abortion rights that is troublesome: "But how, one might ask, can I square a recognition of the humanity of the fetus, and the moral gravity of destroying it, with a pro-choice position? The answer can only be found in the context of a paradigm abandoned by the left and misused by the right: the paradigm of sin and redemption."

That seems an odd paradigm for this problem. It is one thing to have sinned, atoned, and sought redemption. It seems quite another to justify planning to sin on the ground that you also plan to seek redemption afterward. That justification seems even stranger for repeat abortions, which Wolf says are at least 43 percent of the total. Sin plus redemption falls short as a resolution of her dilemma. If that were an adequate resolution, it would seem to follow, given the humanity of the fetus, that infanticide, the killing of the elderly, indeed any killing for convenience, would be licensed if atonement and redemption were planned in advance.

Nor is it clear why the evil is necessary. It is undeniable that bearing and rearing a child sometimes places a great burden on a woman or a family. That fact does not, however, answer the question whether the burden justifies destroying a human life. In most other contexts, we would say such a burden is not sufficient justification. The fact is, in any event, that the burden need not be borne. Putting the child up for adoption is an alternative. The only drawback is that others will know the woman is pregnant. If that is the reason to choose abortion, then the killing really is for convenience.

But it is clear, in any event, that the vast majority of all abortions are for convenience. In those cases, abortion is used as merely one more technique of birth control. A 1987 survey of the reasons given by women for having abortions made by researchers with the Alan Guttmacher Institute, which is very much pro-abortion, demonstrated this fact. The following table shows the percentage of women who gave the listed reasons.

Reason	Total Percentage
Woman is concerned about how having a baby could change her life	76
Woman can't afford baby now	68
Woman has problems with relationship or wants to avoid single parenthood	51
Woman is unready for responsibility	31
Woman doesn't want others to know she has had sex or is pregnant	31
Woman is not mature enough or is too young to have a child	30
Woman has all the children she wanted, or has all grown-up children	26
Husband or partner wants woman to have abortion	23
Fetus has possible health problem	13
Woman has health problem	7
Woman's parents want her to have abortion	7
Woman was victim of rape or incest	1
Other	6

It is clear that the overwhelming number of abortions were for birth control unrelated to the health of the fetus or the woman. Moreover, of those who were concerned about a possible health problem of the fetus, only 8 percent said that a physician had told them that the fetus had a defect or was abnormal. The rest were worried because they had taken medication, drugs, or alcohol before realizing they were pregnant, but did not apparently obtain a medical confirmation of any problem. Of those aborting because of their own health, 53 percent said a doctor had told them their condition would be made worse by being pregnant. Some of the rest cited physical problems, and 11 percent gave a mental or emotional problem as the reason. Only 1 percent cited rape or incest.

The survey noted that "some 77 percent of women with incomes under 100 percent or between 100 and 149 percent of the poverty level said they were having an abortion because they could not afford to have a child, compared with 69 percent of those with incomes between 150 and 199 percent and 60 percent of those with incomes at or above 200 percent of the poverty level." The can't-afford category thus included a great many women who, by most reckonings, could afford to have a baby and certainly could have

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put the baby up for adoption.

This demonstration that abortion is almost always a birth control technique rather than a response to a serious problem with the mother's or the fetus' health must have been a considerable embarrassment to the pro-abortion forces. Perhaps for that reason no survey by them seems to have been reported since. More recent statistics by anti-abortion groups, however, bear out the conclusions to be drawn from the Guttmacher Institute study. The reasons most women give for having an abortion are "social": a baby would affect their educations, jobs, lives, or they felt unable to handle it economically, their partners did not want babies, etc.

Perhaps the most instructive episode demonstrating the brutalization of our culture by abortion was the fight over "partial-birth abortions." These abortions are usually performed late in the pregnancy. The baby is delivered feet first until only the head remains within the mother. The aborting physician inserts scissors into the back of the infant's skull and opens the blades to produce a hole. The child's brains are then vacuumed out, the skull collapses, and the rest of the newly made corpse is removed. If the head had been allowed to come out of the mother, killing the baby then would be the criminal act of infanticide.

When it was proposed to outlaw this hideous procedure, which obviously causes extreme pain to the baby, the pro-abortion forces in Congress and elsewhere made false statements to fend off the legislation or to justify an anticipated presidential veto. Planned Parenthood and the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League stated that the general anesthesia given the mother killed the fetus so that there is no such thing as a partial-birth abortion. Physicians promptly rebutted the claim. Local anesthesia, which is most often used in these abortions, has no effect on the baby and general anesthesia not only does not kill the baby, it provides little or no painkilling effect to the baby. The vice president of the Society for Obstetric Anesthesia and Perinatology said the claim was "crazy," noting that "anesthesia does not kill an infant if you don't kill the mother." Two doctors who perform partial-birth abortions stated that the majority of fetuses aborted in this fashion are alive until the end of the procedure.

Other opponents of a ban on partial-birth abortions claimed that it was used only when necessary to protect the mother's life. Unfortunately for that argument, the physician who is the best-known practitioner of these abortions stated in 1993 that 80 percent of them are "purely elective," not necessary to save the mother's life or health. Partial-birth understates the matter. The baby is outside the mother except for its head, which is kept in the mother only to avoid a charge of infanticide. Full birth is inches away and could easily be accomplished.

No amount of discussion, no citation of evidence, can alter the opinions of radical feminists about abortion. One evening I naively remarked in a talk that those who favor the right to abort would likely change their minds if they could be convinced that a human being was being killed. I was startled at the anger that statement provoked in several women present. One of them informed me in no uncertain terms that the issue had nothing to do with the humanity of the fetus but was entirely about the woman's freedom. It is here that radical egalitarianism reinforces radical individualism in supporting the abortion right. Justice Harry Blackmun, who wrote *Roe* and who never offered the slightest constitutional defense of it, simply remarked that the decision was a landmark on women's march to equality. Equality, in this view, means that if men do not bear children, women should not have to either. Abortion is seen as women's escape from the idea that biology is destiny, to escape from the tyranny of the family role.

Discussions about life and death in one area influence such decisions in others. Despite assurances that the abortion decision did not start us down a slippery and very steep slope, that is clearly where we are, and gathering speed. The systematic killing of unborn children in huge numbers is part of a general disregard for human life that has been growing for some time. Abortion by itself did not cause that disregard, but it certainly deepens and legitimates the nihilism that is spreading in our culture and finds killing for convenience acceptable. We are crossing lines, at first slowly and now with rapidity: killing unborn children for convenience; removing tissue from live fetuses; contemplating creating embryos for destruction in research; considering taking organs from living anencephalic babies; experimenting with assisted suicide; and contemplating euthanasia. Abortion has coarsened us. If it is permissible to kill the unborn human for convenience, it is surely permissible to kill those thought to be soon to die for the same reason. And it is inevitable that many who are not in danger of imminent death will be killed to relieve their families of burdens. Convenience is becoming the theme of our culture. Humans tend to be inconvenient at both ends of their lives. FT

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Jews in Multicultural America

Alan L. Mittleman

For some decades, American Jews have made sense of the relation between their Americanness and their Jewishness through the concept of cultural pluralism. This concept allowed a flexible but expansive Jewish ethnic and religious identity to coexist with an equally normative American identity. The content of both Jewishness and Americanness may have been somewhat protean, but both mattered. Most Jews did not consider their Americanness to be simply a matter of citizenship, of what sort of passport they carried. Being an American implied a set of identity-shaping commitments. Citizenship in a liberal democracy, such as America, bore with it its own myths, history, and fellowship. Pluralism reconciled this complex American identity with an equally complex Jewishness.

Within the last several decades, however, the concept of cultural pluralism has given way to another concept, which, if only superficially, appears to derive from and improve upon it: multiculturalism. But this concept is fundamentally distinct from the pluralism that has well served American Jews. Multiculturalism, if it were to succeed pluralism altogether, would be inimical to American Jews.

The term pluralism was popularized by a Jewish professor of philosophy, Horace Meyer Kallen (1882-1974), shortly after the First World War. Kallen, like most Jews of his day, was extraordinarily proud to be an American, but was troubled by the idea of the American Melting Pot. He did not believe that it was ethical or wise to insist that different peoples entirely efface their differences. He imagined that the various immigrant groups could hold on to some significant portion of their heritage and, precisely because of that distinctive identity, offer a unique contribution to America.

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On the one hand, Kallen envisioned Americanness as a substantive, normative cultural identity. America was more than just a place of opportunity. America and its civil faith (which he called "the American Idea") stood for a distinctive set of moral and political values. Values such as optimism, progress, democracy, individualism, and freedom could and should unite the nation. Yet precisely because America stands or falls on its ideas, we can come to its ideas or articulate its ideas in our own distinctive ways. To be united by the values of America, one did not need to shed one's ethnic identity. Indeed, one ought not to. Kallen's favorite metaphor was the orchestra. Distinctive ethnicities, like different instruments, could contribute harmoniously to the whole.

Kallen's notion of cultural pluralism was an adaptation of the metaphysical philosophy of his Harvard teacher and mentor, the famous American philosopher William James. In 1909, James published his Hibbert Lectures at Oxford under the title, *A Pluralistic Universe.* James meant by pluralism a philosophical vision that opposed Hegelian absolute idealism. Pluralism was meant to account for reality as we actually experience it in its individuality, vitality, and empirical concreteness. James hoped to refute the modern forms of idealism and monism, stemming from Spinoza and Hegel and their Anglo-American imitators, and return us to the pre-philosophic world of actuality, a "turbid, muddled, gothic sort of an affair, without a sweeping outline and with little pictorial nobility." James prized the individual, the particular, the personal. He rejected, no less than Kierkegaard or Rosenzweig, philosophy's effort to subsume the part in the whole.

Kallen's contribution was to take the metaphysical mood of Jamesian pragmatism and apply it to culture. And who better than a Jew striving to be an American to do so? America was founded in an environment of religious pluralism. Religious pluralism, which generally implied the considerable variety of

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Protestant denominations as well as the Catholics and some few Jews, was a fact that most Americans had come to accept as relatively benign. But cultural or ethnic pluralism, aggravated by the great migrations after the Civil War, was far more challenging and difficult for the older American stock to accept. America had two answers. The first was nativism—the view that only the older American stock could properly understand and maintain distinctive American values. The second answer was the melting pot: the cauldron in which out of many cultures would come one. Kallen rejected both.

Like most Jews of his day, Kallen found an uncanny agreement between the core values of Judaism (or "Hebraism," as he preferred to call it) and those of America. This, of course, was not surprising, since America was settled, if not founded, by people who took the Bible rather seriously. Furthermore, the way they took the Bible seriously was significantly similar to the way Jews took the Bible. That is, both Calvinists and Jews read the Bible, with its pervasive theme of covenantalism, as (in part at least) a political text.

Covenant was not just a theological idea for the Puritans; it was an eminently political one. They founded their towns and commonwealths as covenantal republics: voluntary societies bound together by the laws of God and the desire to serve Him in freedom. These covenants were later transformed by political theory and practice into the somewhat more secular compacts and social contracts of eighteenth-century thought.

The basic idea remained the same however: societies are originated by free men in order to enable persons to have a common life directed toward the fulfillment of a noble end. Participation in the society requires consent to the founding principles. Liberty within the society is not absolute or negative. It is liberty to work within and to promote the common good.

It is this basically biblical and rather secular vision that Jews such as Kallen found intrinsic to America. Proud of his Jewish heritage and convinced of its affinity with American ideals, Kallen thought it reasonable that the more Jews cultivated their heritage, the more they would contribute to the American whole. Similiarly, the more they discerned the true values (however imperfectly realized) of America, the better they would refine and live their Judaism. Assuming then that the Jewish difference was real and valuable, Kallen also believed that ethnic differences on the whole were real and valuable. At the same time, however, ethnic differences should be negotiable and malleable. They must be directed to or ordered by a concern for an American common good.

To put it somewhat abstractly, primordial identity and the citizenship identity of the liberal society must condition one another. Civil society is not just a blank page on which the ethnic communities write their own stories for their own readership. Civil society has its own demands and requirements. It will and ought to have a transformative effect on primordial groups. The groups must have their liberty, however, and will, in turn, have a transformative effect on the civil society.

It is easy to see how cultural pluralism served as a useful ideology for generations of American Jews who wanted to retain their Jewishness while uninhibitedly affirming their Americanness. But it is easy to forget that this perspective worked only because Americanness and Judaism were conceived to a significant degree as ideals, indeed, as mutually compatible ideals. If we allow ourselves no coherent formulation of what America means or of what Judaism means, then we can obviously claim no link or essential likeness between them. And this is apparently precisely what has happened. Serious thought about the relationship of Judaism to Americanness no longer occurs. It seems terribly old-fashioned now, a relic of Kallen's time inappropriate to our own. Rabbinic sermons, a good guide to popular Jewish thinking, dealt frequently with the relationship of Judaism to America in the 1950s. But this theme is nonexistent today.

One might explain this absence as caused by a normal coming of age. The theme was crucial for the immigrant and second generations, but taken for granted by the third and subsequent generations. Undoubtedly there is some truth to this. But I think another issue is at stake: the hollowing out of Americanness—the loss of any consensus, however minimal, of what being an American means. Against this background, cultural pluralism is increasingly superseded by the ideology of multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism, I would suggest, is a mode of decoupling ethnic and religious communities from some imagined, normative Americanness. Multiculturalism celebrates or affirms difference for its own sake and as its own terminus. The multiculturalist does not see a need to order difference in relation to a common good. If there is a common good, it is a good common only to members of a given group. The common good is a tribal good.

Of the factors that contributed to the rise of this ideology, the most salient one is that America no longer holds any radical or unique meaning for many Americans. After the assassinations and cultural upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s, after the debacles of Vietnam and Watergate, we are left with no innocence and much reticence about ourselves. We no longer believe that we have a monopoly on the export of ideas. We are no longer certain that we have any distinctive ideas. Nor do we any longer believe that belief in ourselves is the panacea for our own ills. Even the Reagan revolution, for all its cheery boost-

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erism, failed to restore the old confidence in America.

Reaganism replaced Americanness, it seems to me, with a stirring, but not a soul-stirring, ideal: the American Dream. We still talk much in America about this American Dream. We argue about whether it is possible to achieve it, and about who can achieve it. We even argue about what, precisely, it is. Of course, almost everyone agrees it has to do with money, with employment, with security. But beyond the basics of economic opportunity, there is no coherent or accepted vision of the American dream. It is for this reason that the American dream is not a substitute for the bygone ideals of America. Its vision is too narrow. It is the vision of *homo oeconomicus*, of the consumer, of the private person. It is not really the dream of the citizen, of the defender of a culture, of the aspirant for a good society. It is not a bad dream, but it is not the stuff that great dreams are made of.

Americanness as a civil religion is, to all intents and purposes, dead. There is thus a vacuum where our belief in our own exceptionalism used to be. As the poet Robert Bly once wrote, "The world will break up into small communities of the saved." This eerie eschatological premonition seems to me increasingly to describe our present. A vacuum has sucked all the pieces of stained glass out of the window of American pluralism. Multiculturalism is the attempt to reassemble them without, as it were, a surrounding frame.

Multiculturalism should not be confused with pluralism or the tolerant and empathetic cosmopolitanism that often accompanies pluralism. Critics of multiculturalism are often mistaken for old-fashioned chauvinists, nativists, or know-nothing advocates of a nasty melting pot, as if they were rejecting pluralism or cosmopolitanism per se. Could any serious intellectual really argue that students at a serious university not study Chinese poetry or African art or Jewish literature, for that matter? This is unthinkable. What critics of multiculturalism criticize is not the cosmopolitan breadth to which educated persons have always aspired, but a certain dogmatic dismissiveness toward the Western tradition.

The Western tradition, as conceived by contemporary academic multiculturalists, is little more than the aesthetic and religious false consciousness of various types of oppressors: the racist, the classist, the heterosexist, the misogynist. Far from being a source of moral guidance, the Western tradition seems more and more like a roadmap of destinations to avoid. It shows you what not to emulate, what not to hope for, how not to live, what not to be. It is this attitude of scorn—which is as little justified in the university as an attitude of boosterism—to which the critics of multiculturalism call attention.

While pluralism affirmed cultural difference on account of its service to a common good, multiculturalism, as noted above, denies the integrity of a common good. It cannot or will not see beyond a tribal good. This disposition is born, it seems to me, less of pride or satisfaction in what is one's own than in despair of or rage toward the public world. The ideas of the public world, formerly constitutive of Americanness, were not, multiculturalism tells us, truly public, truly shared. They were actually the intellectual property of the reigning elite. The ideal of an open, pluralistic society was a sham.

Consider a typical case, in which American Jews had a considerable role and investment. American Jews, good pluralists that they were, generally endorsed the policy of racial integration. They certainly believed that blacks had a right to their culture, that they had a right to be proud of their culture, both American and African, and that they had a right to a fuller share of economic and social goods. American Jews worked to dismantle racial barriers, to open up greater educational opportunities, to end discrimination in the work place. They imagined that they were acting out of the deepest convictions of the Jewish tradition and in accordance with the high, if as yet imperfectly realized, ideals of America. This was cultural pluralism at its best.

But as the black civil rights movement turned increasingly toward nationalism and black separatism, Jews found that the values they thought were constitutive of the public world, such as equality of opportunity and merit, were now thought parochial and pernicious. Integration was rejected by black nationalists as a malevolent strategy of assimilation. Nationalists such as Stokely Carmichael called it "the final solution to the Negro problem" and "a subterfuge for white supremacy." Robert Browne, echoing Carmichael's Nazi allusion, called integration "a form of painless genocide."

The idea of merit, once considered by liberal pluralists to be a neutral rule for allocating goods, was now assigned a strictly demonic, oppressive character. In fact, an essayist in the leftist Jewish journal *Tikkun* argued, the entire "rhetoric of reason, neutrality, and objectivity actually constitutes the particular discourse of power that white Europeans employed in order to justify their own privileged status." When confidence in a morally substantive public world is lost, there are no ideas that rise above race, above primordial loyalties, above the war of all against all.

When the black nationalists of the sixties and seventies rejected the ameliorative agenda of the Great Society, they spoke from the far edge of a radical fringe. But today the political and theoretical assumptions from which they spoke have become a kind of orthodoxy, at least in much of American academia. Our professors of humanities assure us that reason has no universal form, but is merely a set of social practices that ensure one group's domination over others. Knowledge is not only power, it is nothing but power. This equation of knowledge and power, of truth and politics is deeply entrenched in

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the academy. But is it not especially malign for a nation constituted by its ideas, such as the United States, and for a people which has lived for its ideas, such as the Jews?

Jews have been able to flourish in the United States because the primary American form of identity is that of citizenship. Jews and others have had the best of both worlds: they have enjoyed a citizenship identity in the national polity and have, without contradiction, enjoyed a more primordial identity conferred by their own historic tradition. Other modern states, of course (or at least the liberal elements in them), tried to base participation in the polity upon citizenship as well. But, in practice, the primordial identity of ethnicity, race, or religion often imposed severe limits on the possibilities of citizenship. In America, by contrast, citizenship has proved more normative than it has in European countries. One obvious reason for this is that America is an immigrant society, without any organic national base. But another reason is that America, the "first new nation," was built on ideas. Citizenship meant subscription or consent to the ideals and principles of the founding national covenant. Primordial loyalties and identities were in some significant way irrelevant to participation in that covenant.

Multiculturalism seeks to attenuate citizenship identity and to substitute primordial identity as a more radically satisfying, self-sufficient framework. But this can only be done at the cost of forfeiting any shared moral language, any meaningful public discourse, any thick concept of what it means to be an American. The erosion of cultural pluralism and the drift toward the new ideal of multiculturalism pose real hazards for American Jews, because they weaken the citizenship on which Jewish participation in modern society is based.

Multiculturalism also seems to offer some attractions, however, and it has its defenders, both on the right and on the left. As a consciously formulated ideology, it appeals to Jews on the left because it offers a new rationale for solidarity with oppressed and colonialized people around the world. In this version of multiculturalism, what I have called primordial identity must not be thought of as a fixed or stable property. Jewish identity becomes a matter of millennial otherness, of historical marginalization. Devoid of essentialistic or substantive criteria of identity, "Jewishness" becomes another "otherized" (and "otherizing") social construct, a product of the exclusionary practices by which dominant groups define themselves.

Jewishness is what is left to the losers after the dominant groups distribute the spoils of social conflict. Jewishness is not fundamentally different from blackness, femaleness, gayness, etc. These have no essence, no inner life. They are but names we assign to complex, shifting indices of the power dynamics of social life. The multiculturalist Jews of the left would link the Jew to every marginal and disempowered "other" at the cost of letting nothing but some elusive "otherness" remain.

But multiculturalism also describes an attitude found among those who would normally not speak its name, the Jews on the right. Sociologists of American Jewry have long noted both the resurgence of Orthodoxy and the enfeeblement of that same Orthodoxy's moderate center. Orthodoxy survived in the modern world in two forms: a sectarian, separatist hard core that resisted modernization and a modernist wing that accommodated itself to secular society. The latter group gave Orthodoxy its public face in America. Associated with Yeshiva University and the teaching of the late Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, "modern Orthodoxy" prized both traditional piety and practice and the values and cognitive norms of modern culture. This modernist Orthodoxy has been severely eroded. The more insular sectarian Orthodoxy, far less concerned with accommodation to the contemporary world, is today far more confident than centrist Orthodoxy. The children of Orthodox Ph.D.s, raised in American suburbia, now spurn their parents' universities and hope to spend their lives in right-wing Jerusalem yeshivot. Where Orthodox congregants once followed the Torah reading in the Hertz Pentateuch, with its vigorous polemic against the documentary hypothesis, they now read the Art Scroll edition, a volume that has not the slightest interest in establishing any links between Torah and secular consciousness.

To a certain extent, the motivation here is the same as that of the left. The Enlightenment and the values of modernity are thought a kind of sham, an idol. They seduce Jews away from their own primordiality, from their overwhelming intimacy with God. The hyper-Orthodox want to live in an integral, sacred cosmos. The political realm, if it cannot be assimilated to that cosmos (which of course it cannot in the Diaspora), is of marginal significance. The national polity is not an object of care or concern for its own sake. It must simply be dealt with in terms of the crassest interest politics as the need arises. There is no distinctive or normative significance in an American identity.

These Jewish variations on the multicultural theme are born, like their gentile counterparts, out of the conviction that citizenship no longer constitutes a significant or distinctive identity. The balance between the public and the primordial has tilted. Without a renewal of our conviction that being an American implies meaning and confers a distinctive worth, the consensus, however minimal, upon which a free society rests can only weaken. If people revert to more primordial forms of belonging, civil society will dissolve and American Jews might find themselves in what the prophet Ezekiel called a *midbar ha-ammim*, a wilderness of the peoples. This would be a nightmarish denouement to Kallen's once admired American Idea. F1

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Our Culture, Our World

A. J. Bacevich

For students of strategy, the most persistent controversies revolve around elementary issues. Is strategy an art or a science? How far beyond military operations does the realm of strategy extend? What precepts should guide strategic analysis? Or is it an error even to presume the existence of such precepts? The persistence of disagreement over such basic matters is attributable in the first instance to the strategists' inability to answer the most fundamental question of all: What is strategy?

And yet, though they may disagree about what precisely strategy is, strategists do not differ about where the responsibility for formulating strategy lies. By common understanding, strategy is the province of political and military elites. Strategy emanates from the top. It is devised in the palace, the cabinet room, the supreme headquarters. It is debated, drafted, and approved by the prince and his ministers and then disseminated for implementation to those sworn to do the prince's bidding.

A corollary of this general agreement is that the influence of the people on matters of strategy is likely to be baleful. Dropped into conversations relating to strategy, phrases like "public opinion" or "domestic politics" are freighted with pejorative connotations. Left unchecked, these phenomena subvert the careful, considered formulation of high policy. They signify unwelcome intrusions into the sphere that strategists have claimed as their own, interfering with the proper exercise of their craft. To strategists, the people are by nature fickle and shortsighted. They are too easily swayed by sentiment, images, and considerations extraneous to sound decision making. Even when strategists are willing to concede that a policy initiative requires public support, it is not debate that they seek but unconditional acquiescence.

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Even in democratic America, this notion that strategy should be cordoned off from the common folk is well-enshrined. Indeed, it qualifies as one of the central tenets of the American strategic tradition that has evolved since the end of World War II. In the influential writings of George Kennan, for example, the perniciousness of public opinion and domestic politics forms an abiding theme. Lamenting the "histrionic futility" of so much American statecraft, the legendary diplomat and historian used his influential memoirs to denounce official Washington's penchant for truckling to popular prejudices. American politicians, according to Kennan, all too readily sacrifice strategic coherence to grab even passing political advantage through the "mere striking of attitudes before the mirror of domestic political opinion." This, he suggests, has been the central defect of American policy.

Among Kennan's heirs in the American foreign policy establishment—an incestuous guild of government officials, senior military professionals, policy-oriented intellectuals, and insider journalists—his critique continues to resonate. Notwithstanding the ultimate success achieved by postwar U.S. grand strategy, they recall the contest as having been at times a close-run thing. With near unanimity, they trace the lapses marring that record at least in part to the mishandling or misreading of public opinion. Thus, in this view, Truman's conscious decision to "scare hell out of" the American people led him to overstate the Communist threat in the late 1940s, thereby setting the stage for the hysteria of McCarthyism and making it all the more difficult for his successors to distinguish between real threats and phantasms. Similarly, in the early 1960s, a determination to immunize himself against charges of being "soft" on communism drew John F. Kennedy into reckless adventurism in Cuba and Southeast Asia. Most damaging of all, Kennedy's successor, Lyndon Johnson, blundered into an unwinnable war lest he

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suffer the electoral consequences of being blamed for the "loss" of Vietnam.

Thus, in the strategist's hierarchy of the essentials of statesmanship, few qualities rank higher than having the courage to "do the right thing" regardless of public opinion. Leaders who allow themselves to be imprisoned by the polls or who gauge decisions according to calculations of partisan advantage to be gained or lost invite disaster. In contrast, those who make politically tough but strategically principled decisions in the face of adverse public opinion—like George Bush in the Persian Gulf—earn high honors.

Since the collapse of communism and the end of the Soviet threat, however, the relevance of the old principles is no longer self-evident. As those principles have lost their salience, the authority of the foreign policy establishment itself has collapsed. Much to the chagrin of the members of that establishment, today's would-be successors to the Wise Men of the early Cold War—renowned figures such as Kennan, George Marshall, Dean Acheson, and Paul Nitze—have failed either to fit the old principles to our new situation or to devise adequate replacements. No new "Long Telegram" has arrived at the State Department message center to galvanize Washington into action. No new Truman Doctrine has been proffered to instruct or harness the masses. Both the Bush Administration's "new world order" and Clinton's "strategy of enlargement" fizzled, apparently exhausting the foreign policy elite's capacity for Big Thinking.

As a result, rather than being formulated in accordance with some carefully crafted blueprint, U.S. national security policy appears to be evolving willy-nilly as a byproduct of events. Reaction rather than anticipation has become the order of the day. American goals and American initiatives stem not from farsighted decisions emerging from the White House but from the need to improvise a response to the sundry crises that have followed in the trail of the Cold War: Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the plight of the Kurds following Desert Storm, starvation in Somalia, genocide in Rwanda, massive refugee flows out of Haiti and Cuba, the shadowy threat posed by North Korea's nuclear program, seemingly interminable civil war in Bosnia, and on-again, off-again jousting with a weakened but unchastened Saddam Hussein.

Played out under the hot glare of the media, each of these crises has been transformed into a tidy parable. Each parable in turn has yielded one or more sound-bite sized moral lessons—some positive, some negative—assumed to possess near-universal applicability. In the absence of principles, these sound-bites—"disproportionate force" (good), "mission creep" (bad), "exit strategy" (essential), "dual key" (unacceptable), "American leadership" (imperative)—set the parameters for subsequent discourse about policy.

A checklist makes a poor substitute for vision. Still, given the attention commanded by the "lessons" derived from such adventures as Desert Storm and Somalia, it is plausible to argue that a full-fledged new American strategy is emerging incrementally. In other words, even if elites have failed to devise an overarching conceptual framework, accumulated precedents drawn from the U.S. experience in a succession of cases are permitting those elites to stitch together a de facto strategy bit by bit.

That impression is misleading on two counts. First, it attributes to the crises of the post-Cold War era—and to the American response to those crises—a uniqueness and precedent-setting capacity that they do not deserve. Although obscured by the thick layers of rhetoric proclaiming the daunting complexities of the new era, much in the U.S. response to these crises is not new.

The Clinton Administration's effort to depict the recent U.S. intervention in Haiti as a break with the past, for example, is arrant nonsense. Rather, it is simply the latest episode of a long-running serial in which the United States has routinely used force to maintain a semblance of order throughout the Caribbean basin. Of course, some would differentiate between those earlier episodes and the restoration of President Aristide to power on the basis of motivation, with the present administration's devotion to democracy contrasting with the nefarious intent of its various predecessors both Republican and Democratic. But sustaining this view requires turning a blind eye to sordid truths about Haitian society and slightly less sordid realities of American politics, amounting to a willful suspension of disbelief that even Clinton's supporters are increasingly hard-pressed to carry off.

Nor does Clinton's decision to deploy U.S. troops to Bosnia constitute a defining moment. Certainly, it does not represent the first time a well-intentioned American President felt compelled to muck about in someone else's civil war. The soldiers dispatched by Woodrow Wilson into Mexico on multiple occasions and into the fledgling Soviet Union at the end of World War I would say otherwise.

There is a second reason why the "case method" will fail to produce a genuine new strategic synthesis. Developments are already raising doubts as to the durability of even the most prominent "lessons" derived from the crises that have preoccupied the United States since the end of the Cold War. If the cases themselves are not as unique as frequently depicted, neither are the precedents that they generate proving to have a lasting shelf-life. This is very much the case with the Bosnian intervention. There the United States has effectively jettisoned operational precepts that only a year ago appeared sacrosanct: sending troops only where vital U.S. interests are engaged and public support is secured and then using overwhelming force in pursuit of clearly

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defined objectives. Whether one judges this most recent American experiment in peacemaking to be judicious or the height of folly, President Clinton's initiative has in one stroke rendered the vaunted Powell Doctrine obsolete. Yet far from providing a template to guide U.S. policy elsewhere, the emerging Clinton Doctrine for the use of force proffers military action as a substitute for strategic coherence.

In other words, just as a new strategy for post-Cold War America will not arrive at the hands of a burnt-out policy elite, neither is it likely to emerge as a by-product of workaday crises that, whatever their intrinsic drama, are neither as remarkable nor as influential as commonly portrayed.

Instead, that new American strategy, if it develops at all, will emerge from an entirely unexpected quarter. It will be the product of the most dynamic force loose on the planet today, a force possessed of transcendent energy and yet riddled with spectacular contradictions, indeed, a force very much at war with itself. It will come from our culture.

In his provocative article "The Clash of Civilizations?", Samuel P. Huntington has suggested that in the coming era "the great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural." Henceforth, according to Huntington, differences in culture will determine the agenda of international politics, driving powerful wedges between nations and pitting civilizations against one another. Although Huntington does not depict violent inter-civilizational collisions as inevitable, the overall tone of his essay suggests that managing relationships across critical cultural fault lines will pose huge challenges.

Why at the end of a century notable for extraordinary violence has culture assumed such an explosive potential? According to Huntington, culture has superseded ideology in its capacity to incite collective passions. It embraces the issues about which people care most and accentuates the divergence of views on those issues. "The people of different civilizations," writes Huntington, "have different views on the relations between God and man, the individual and the group, the citizen and the state, parents and children, husband and wife, as well as differing views of the relative importance of rights and responsibilities, liberty and authority, equality and hierarchy."

Implicit in Huntington's model is the assumption that the United States is at once embedded in and serves as the cultural vanguard of "the West." Huntington contrasts the nations of the West with what he calls "torn countries," defined as "countries with large numbers of peoples of different civilizations." Torn countries, according to Huntington, are highly susceptible to fragmentation and under duress may even disintegrate.

Yet in a cultural sense, no nation more aptly fulfills Huntington's definition of a torn country than does the United States. In large measure, the insistence that we are a nation comprised of "many people from many different civilizations" constitutes the very bedrock of our national identity. That this diversity explains America's extraordinary vitality—*E pluribus unum*—has long been a staple of national mythology.

But this myth oversimplifies a complex reality. Cultural diversity cuts both ways. If it produces energy, it also generates friction. The United States may not be prone to disintegrate in the manner of other "torn countries" such as Yugoslavia or the Soviet Union. But Huntington's litany of differences that provoke conflict between civilizations could be used without modification to describe the key divisions that presently produce conflict within America: fundamental disagreement over the relationship between God and man, individual and group, citizen and state, parents and children, husband and wife along with fiercely antagonistic views regarding the comparative importance of rights and responsibilities, liberty and authority, equality and hierarchy. In other words, the fractious battleground of contemporary American politics with its strong cultural content is a microcosm of global politics.

However indirectly, therefore, the forces fueling America's cultural dissonance—born of the demise of liberalism and given further impetus by the decisive resolution of the century's central ideological competition—will determine the role that the United States chooses to play internationally. Ultimately, the outcome of the culture war will determine American strategy. For this reason, the different camps vying against one another in that war deserve far closer scrutiny from strategists than they have yet received.

A preliminary step toward analyzing the strategic fallout of the culture war is to recognize it as a fundamental departure from the politics of the post-war era. Although still in common usage, the political vocabulary and political classifications from that era have lost much of their utility. At root, the culture war is not a dispute of Republicans against Democrats or conservatives against liberals. In its external dimension, it does not pit realists against idealists or internationalists against isolationists. It is rather a battle between three factions.

The first faction is the smallest, yet may also be the most problematic of the three: the postmodernist camp. American postmodernists are the radicals of the 1960s. Over the years, if they have not become more revolutionary, they have at least become progressively more perverse. They are fiercely antagonistic to religion and traditional social structures. They hold middle-class values in contempt and take cynical delight in flaunting accepted conventions of taste and morality. Although unlikely ever to achieve more than minority status, postmodernists wield dis-

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proportionate influence in universities and key cultural institutions.

The postmodernist contribution to conversation about U.S. strategy is likely to be entirely negative. Derisive of the established view, postmodernists will reject all American efforts to maintain the international status quo, aiming ultimately to undermine the legitimacy of American power. Although the postmodernists are unlikely to win the culture war, they may well succeed in disrupting efforts to conduct a comprehensible strategic dialogue.

The second faction in the culture war consists of technological visionaries, the swelling cohort of Americans—mostly young, mostly well-educated, highly energetic—who believe that technology is transforming society in ways that are fundamental, unavoidable, and irreversible. The centerpiece of their vision is an "information society" in which traditional culture will become passé, national identity will lose its purpose, and the nation-state will be superseded by global entities. The world of the technological visionaries is unabashedly secular, materialistic, and individualistic, and they regard the expansion of the information society not simply as an opportunity but as a mission. Persuaded that their purposes are benign and irresistible, they are blind to the anxiety, resentment, and resistance that their efforts will provoke.

The third faction in the American culture war is the cultural traditionalists. Adherents of this faction have several icons, chief among them Ronald Reagan—or at least the image of Reagan carefully fashioned by the former President and his handlers: patriotic, God-fearing, alive to the fears and aspirations of the ordinary citizen, in touch with the true spirit of America. Religion is integral to the traditionalists' vision of a healthy civil society. Even if not personally religious (though many are), cultural traditionalists are determined to preserve the idea of God. They are interested not in remaking global society, but in salvaging their own. Summoned at the dawn of the postwar era to exert themselves in the interest of peace and freedom, they made major sacrifices. Determined to reap some reward for their efforts, they bridle at the notion advanced by "inside the Beltway" elites that they are obliged to pay more. For all their suspicion of elites, cultural traditionalists are hungry for leadership and are susceptible to being used or misled.

These then are the chief protagonists presently arrayed against one another. They are, in their own estimation, waging a struggle for the soul of America—thus the utter seriousness with which they have committed themselves to their cause. No one can predict the outcome of that contest. Indeed, before it is finally resolved, the entire conflict may be transmuted, with the stakes revised and new perturbations introduced. Thus, the possibility exists that none of the current rivals will gain a decisive victory.

Of this, however, we can be certain: even though strategic issues will not figure largely in deciding the outcome of the culture war, the resolution of that struggle will determine America's orientation toward the world. As a result, those interested in discerning the emerging shape of American strategy would do well to shed their illusions that the deliberations of elites or the vexing dilemmas of crisis management will give birth to a new strategy. If the United States is to embrace the strategic vision that will enable it to avert, stanch, or prevail in a coming clash of civilizations, the "plain people" must first resolve the cultural conflict in their midst. This essential precondition for strategic renewal is a subject to which strategists would be well advised to direct their attention. FI

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Population and the Wealth of Nations

William McGurn

By any measure, the future for this Asian country looked bleak. Enormously overcrowded, its normal population had skyrocketed, increased not just by a naturally high birthrate but also by revolution in a neighboring country—forcing thousands of desperate refugees upon its borders. Lacking natural resources and utterly dependent upon its unpleasant neighbor for water and food, the country's situation had deteriorated so badly that a local UN official declared the only way for it to survive would be with massive Western aid. An American newspaper proclaimed the country to be "dying," and the government itself inclined to despair. Its own annual report painted a graphic picture:

> Virtually every sizable vacant site . . . was occupied, and when there was no flat land remaining, [people] moved up to the hillsides and colonized the ravines and slopes which were too steep for normal development. The huts were constructed of such material as they could lay hands on at little or no cost—flattened sheets of tin, woodened boarding, cardboard, sacking slung on frames. . . . Land was scarce even for the squatters and the huts were packed like dense honeycombs or irregular warrens at different levels, with little ventilation and no regular access. The shacks themselves were crowded beyond endurance. . . . Density was at a rate of two thousand persons to an acre in single-story huts. There was, of course, no sanitation.

"The problem of a rapidly increasing population," the government lamented, "lies at the core of every problem facing the administration."

These words might describe dozens of countries around the world today. In fact, they were written in the 1950s about Hong Kong—the same British colony that today has become a synonym for dynamism and development, with a per capita gross domestic product eclipsing Mother England's. Indeed, at the very moment these government reports were being written, Hong Kong was on the cusp of a general Asian economic boom that would see real income per capita in Japan and the Four Tigers (Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea) quadruple from 1960 to 1985. Though many observers felt as the American journalist John Robbins did in 1959, when he asserted that "Hong Kong's state of supersaturation" may be "a portent of things to come throughout Asia," the apocalypse they predicted never came to pass. Instead, Hong Kong witnessed the greatest economic boom of its history, and now boasts a population of more than six million people—about five times the number the Hong Kong government in 1954 declared to be its carrying "capacity."

Though there are parts of Hong Kong that rank among the most densely packed areas in the world, it remains a peaceable and safe city—a fact not unrelated to the tangible sense of opportunity granted by its (presently) open economic system. The lesson Hong Kong teaches is that there is no fixed level of resources, no natural capacity, no predefined limit to what people might do if given the opportunity to exercise the real factors in development: enterprise, creativity, and risk.

For the Catholic Church in particular, Hong Kong stands as a sharp rebuke to the reigning zero-sum ethos of the day—and brings us back to the core of Catholic social teaching: the value of human life not only to its possessors but to their neighbors as well. In the dismal abacus of our day, when a pig is born in China, national wealth goes up; when a child is born, it goes down. Almost all the fervor for population control traces back to this premise, which reflects a theological confusion as much as an economic one, and it derives from the historical tendency of Western

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experts to see Asian peoples as mouths and not minds.

When the push for reducing population growth began in the 1950s and 1960s, it owed much to this reduction of the human being to a collection of animal appetites and urges. The philosophical father to this school of thought is, of course, Thomas Malthus, who argued in his *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798) that "the perpetual tendency in the race of man to increase beyond the means of subsistence is one of the great general laws of animated nature which we can have no reason to expect will change." The catastrophes Malthus predicted never came to pass, but his brand of pessimism nonetheless continues.

In 1968 Paul Ehrlich opened his seminal work *The Population Bomb* with the declaration that "the battle to feed all of humanity is over. In the 1970s the world will undergo famines—hundreds of millions of people are going to starve to death." In 1977 Robert McNamara, as head of the World Bank, saw in population growth the "gravest issue" short of nuclear war and in a particularly prophetic statement lamented that the decisions that had led to this growth were "not in the exclusive control of a few governments but rather in the literally hundreds of millions of individual parents who will determine the outcome." Back in the 1950s William Vogt, in his best-selling book, *Road to Survival*, attributed Asia's population growth to "untrammeled copulation" by "the backward billion," while A. J. Carlson warned in a 1955 article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* that "if we breed like rabbits, in the long run we have to live and die like rabbits." Everywhere the distaste for human beings was on display—joined to the notion that the poorer parts of the world were dragging down richer.

"It is easy to imagine the United States or Canada or Brazil, or even—with somewhat more effort—France supporting twice its 1960 population on a reasonably decent standard of living," observed John Robbins in his 1959 book, *Too Many Asians*. But how, he asked, "can twice as many Asians hope to live on even today's miserable scale?" As it turned out, of course, Asia more than doubled in size and set off a new industrial revolution whose impact on human welfare has been of revolutionary proportions by virtually any measure: infant mortality, literacy, life expectancy, caloric intake, etc. The Indian economist Amartya Sen notes, moreover, that the growth in per capita income has been about one-third greater in countries at the bottom of the economic heap than those at the high end, and that the figures would be even higher if sub-Saharan Africa were excluded.

There is no way to deny this achievement. In his recent book *Asia Rising*, the economist Jim Rohwer points out that from 1970 to 1990 the number of desperately poor East Asians fell from 400 million to 180 million, even while the population of those countries was rising by 425 million—in other words, East Asia achieved a net rescue from poverty of almost 650 million people. It was done, moreover, in places with few natural resources and against all expectations.

A few observers did foresee this at the time. Amid all the headlines predicting famine and chaos, there appears an astounding paragraph written in a 1957 by Isamu Shimura, the Japanese managing director of Toyo Menka Kaisha. Inverting the usual way of looking at population and economics, he showed himself far more astute than many experts when he wrote:

> Instead of thinking our population is too large for our economy, I believe it is more correct to say the scale of our economy is too small for our population. Instead of surplus, unwanted persons, we should view our people as our most valuable natural resource. This is not only the humane but the realistic view. The Japanese people are hard-working, energetic, resourceful, with a high level of education, skills, and competence. We are at the beginning of revolutionary industrial changes among which the recent achievements in synthetic chemistry and the potentialities in the peaceful use of atomic energy are mere portents. These new discoveries indicate clearly that in the economy of the future, whose beginnings are already among us, the economic resources which count will not be natural ones but human—intelligence, skill, and foresight.

It was an extraordinary insight at the time (Shimura also predicted that Japan would become a major producer of cars), and it remains telling today as we move toward a globalized economy. And the thoughts it voices about the relationship between people and wealth are equally applicable to modern China and Indonesia. Not only has China's embrace of the market ended food shortages, but—in booming Canton—the experiment with markets has been so successful that the province has had to import some ten million Chinese workers from other provinces. Indonesia started to throw off the shackles of socialism in the mid-1960s when President Suharto assumed power, and the result has been one of the fastest sustained economic growth rates in the world. To be sure, East Asia's revolution is not much different from that which the Western world experienced two hundred years before. Since the middle of the eighteenth century, the West's population has more than quadrupled while real income per head increased at least fivefold—an even faster rate than today's population growth in the Third World.

This is not to say that population control has made no headway in Asia. Pushed incessantly by figures like the World Bank's McNamara, the idea that nations could become rich only if they moved to control their population rates became an article of

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faith among Western and Western-educated intellectuals in Asia—a faith backed up by aid dollars linked to the willingness of recipient countries to develop control measures. In the Philippines, for example, the U.S. Agency for International Development obtained a provision in the Marcos-era constitution granting the state authority over population levels. The Western missionary fervor once directed at Christianizing Asia has been channeled, in the second half of the twentieth century, into proselytizing for fewer Asians.

Despite its notable failures, moreover, population control has become orthodoxy in a number of states, especially China. Through the 1950s, Maoist doctrine held large populations to be assets, with increased size corresponding to increased output. In this Mao was right, as the subsequent development of its neighbors demonstrates. Where Chinese communism erred was not in its estimation of the Chinese but in its estimation of communism.

This is not the place to discuss the well-documented horrors of population control in Asia: the forced abortions, sterilizations, and even infanticides. I want to suggest, however, that these horrors are a direct consequence of the idea that development requires poor nations to limit their populations—which also explains, I believe, the pronounced indifference in the West to practices that would provoke outrage were they applied to people in Scarsdale or San Francisco instead of Shanghai and Bombay. Without the economic imperative underlying population control, the abuses have no rational motivation. And so long as that dismal imperative is accepted, reservations (such as those expressed so eloquently by Pope John Paul II) are dismissed as a luxury the world literally cannot afford.

It is worth noting that two to three decades of sustained pressure for the suppression of population growth is beginning to have consequences unforeseen by its advocates. Most of the freer Asian countries at one time or another adopted policies penalizing large families or offering incentives to small families, whether through the tax code or through benefits like preferential housing and jobs. And over the years most of these nations have succeeded in lowering their total fertility rates. From 1953 to 1993, the annual number of births per thousand people in Taiwan dropped from forty-five to sixteen and the average number of children in a Taiwanese family dropped from seven to 1.7 (below the number for the U.S., Britain, and even China). With increased average lifespans, it means a grayer and grayer Taiwan: In 1994 people over sixty-five years old accounted for only 7 percent of the population; by 2036 the figure will be three times as large—which means a smaller percentage of workers. In response to such trends, Singapore has already shifted from promoting smaller families to promoting larger ones. It is in China, however, where population control has been stringent, that two nasty side effects appear most clearly: the world's most rapidly aging society and a dangerously skewed ratio between boys and girls.

The demographic shifts are obvious to the most casual visitor. In the Temple of Heaven Park in Beijing, there are legions of adults for each child. The Chinese press regularly reports on the "little emperors," the army of spoilt only-children used to getting their own way. And these children are the same people who as adults will be called upon to make enormous sacrifices to support China's growing ranks of the elderly—for not only is China graying, it is doing it faster than any population in history. A process that took eighty-five years in Sweden and thirty-two years in Japan will take only twenty-one years in China, according to the Beijing Center of Gerontology. China already has the largest number of elderly in the world, and the projections of the number of workers compared to the number of retirees are stark. The Chinese Statistics Bureau reports that in 1987 the people over sixty years were 13.5 percent. As the effects of the one-child program make themselves felt, however, the numbers leap dramatically: to 23.8 percent in 2020, 36 percent in 2030, and 44.9 percent in 2050—when more than 400 million Chinese will be over sixty years of age, and there will be almost one retiree for every two workers. The Japanese are already paying higher taxes imposed by leaders worried about their own graying society. But Japan's problems pale beside China's, which is nowhere near as wealthy, about ten times more populous, and aging at a much faster clip.

The practice of sex selection creates related problems. Within Asia generally, there exists a strong cultural preference for sons, based on the not irrational idea that sons support their parents in old age and carry on the family name. In China the combination of this bias in favor of sons and the one-child policy has in practice meant the aborting of many fetuses simply because they are girls. The result is that whereas the normal relationship is 104 to 107 boys for every 100 girls born, China now sees 119 boys born for every 100 girls. (Other Asian countries have corresponding figures: 114 in South Korea, 110 in Taiwan, and as many as 112 in India.) This shift too will begin to make itself felt when whole generations of boys suddenly find themselves unable to find wives, with harrowing ramifications for social order.

If the 1995 UN Conference on Population in Cairo demonstrated anything, it is that the Catholic Church remains the chief stumbling block to the true believers in population control. Yet even the Church at times does not seem to realize the strength of its own teaching—its conformity with laws of economics as well as nature and its congruence with what we can now see is the real path to development and opportunity. Unfortunately too the Church can show a keener appreciation of its enemies than its friends,

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and it needs to express more clearly the fundamental unity of its teachings for individuals and its teachings for societies.

This unity is commonly understood in most areas of Church teaching: Traditional morality has always asserted that both the individuals themselves and society in general will be better off if individuals don't steal, don't cheat, and so on down the line. But when it comes to reproduction, the understanding seems to disappear. As a matter of living responsibly, a good case might be made for the bare assertion "no abortion or birth control and damn the consequences." But the Church has faltered in explaining the link between our reproductive behavior as individuals and the health of society. This is why Church leaders who concede the problem of overpopulation find themselves in the losing position of acknowledging a problem for which they must then rule out the obvious solution. Not surprisingly, their position looks arbitrary and unintelligible. And in the West, at least, the result is considerable media pressure for the Church to change its teaching—and an expectation that it will once it faces up to the evidence.

In the case of population, the irony is that no serious market economist accepts the problem as defined, much less the proposed solutions. Whatever their personal views on abortion or birth control as an individual preference, neither Milton Friedman or Gary Becker argue that societies need to curb population growth for development. The more free-market the orientation of economists, the more they recognize that in an open economy individuals produce more than they consume. (It is no coincidence that those thumping the loudest for a state role in controlling population promote a bigger state role in lots of other things as well: A "Catholics Speak Out" advertisement that appeared just before the Cairo conference called upon the Church's "male celibate hierarchy" to revise its teachings on sex, and in the very next sentence described the need to "redistribute" resources.)

Even John Paul II complicates matters for himself when he concedes "grave and serious problems" caused by overpopulation but then encourages people to have as many children as they see fit given their circumstances. Yet the lines are being drawn. For the real and sustained opposition to Church teaching today is, as the Pope indicated in his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, an ascendant "culture of death" that has turned legitimate concerns (such as the state of the environment) into frankly pagan movements. When these movements find themselves opposed to Rome, as they did so dramatically in recent UN conferences, it is not because they are illogical, but because they are simply following their assumptions to their inevitable conclusions. At its core the argument today is not over how many people a given country should have, or even whether abortion and birth control should be legal. At the core, the real argument has to do with the nature of man. Well before it was popular, Gunnar Myrdal realized that "the population question" held out the potential to become "the most effective argument for a thorough and radical socialist remodeling of society." Today the tactical arguments of this crowd have wisely shifted away from control toward "choice," "public health," and "empowerment," but the impetus remains the same.

In my own profession of journalism it is common enough to deride economists as practitioners of the "dismal science." Yet in most cases it is the economists who have maintained faith in human ingenuity and initiative and who have rejected counsels of despair and control. The majority of them have never been found on the front lines of the movement for population control. And the reason is that the best economists spend their lives emphasizing that economic life is not about numbers, but about the triumph of the human mind when given the freedom to innovate and respond. It is the market economist who argues for hope, who points to creativity when others push for control, who recognizes that people are good, in a fundamental, real sense: assets, not liabilities.

It was this human capital that took a desperate refugee population in Hong Kong and turned it into a world-class financial center; this human capital that saw Japan and South Korea arise from the ashes of war; this human capital whose success in turning around centuries of poverty has led to what the World Bank calls "The East Asian Miracle." And it is this philosophy of freedom that offers an answer, really the only answer, to the challenge posed to us by what John Paul II has so presciently recognized as a culture of death.

Certainly in a world where many still go hungry at night there is much to be done. But instead of looking for ways to reduce the number of those seeking to take their place at the table, we should look for ways to eliminate the perverse policies that prevent a bigger banquet. And here Adam Smith will prove a more gracious host than Thomas Malthus. FT

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Redemptive Sex at the Met

Michael R. Linton

Celebrating twenty-five years at the world's greatest opera house, the New York Metropolitan Opera closed its season last year with a well deserved gala honoring conductor James Levine. During his tenure, Levine has raised the Met orchestra to a position where it is universally acclaimed as the finest opera ensemble in the world: The greatest performances of Wagner and Verdi are not now at Bayreuth or La Scala, but at the Met under Levine.

There is another legacy of Levine's Met, however, that has not received the scrutiny it deserves. During the past twenty-five years, the Metropolitan Opera has premiered only two works: Philip Glass's *The Voyage* and John Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles*. Both works were given lavish and heavily rehearsed productions (*The Voyage* reportedly cost over $2.3 million, including Glass's $325,000 fee). And while Levine merits high praise for bringing new works to a house infamous for its stodginess (in 108 years the Met has only presented twenty-seven premieres, including these two), the character of both of these works is troubling. No longer a dowager, the Met has now taken its place as a leader of the post-modern legions—legions almost ravenous in their assault upon the values of Western civilization.

Philip Glass's *The Voyage* was first performed on October 12, 1992 (the Met repeated the production last spring). Although intended as a piece commemorating Columbus' arrival in the New World, Glass and his librettist David Henry Hwang realized the difficulty of putting history on the operatic stage and opted instead, as Glass put it, for a "workshop where allegory and fiction and poetry are brought to a level of the investigation of the human condition." Whatever that may mean (has poetry, or allegory, or fiction ever *not* had something to do with the "human condition"?), the opera is a New Age theodicy where space aliens, crystals, and copulation lead to self-actualization on a cosmic scale.

After a prologue in which a wheelchair-bound scientist prattles off the kind of philosophy usually dismissed in a sophomore philosophy class's second week, we are introduced to four space travelers who are about to crash onto the earth, ca. 17,000 B.C. The ship crashes. The Commander (here a woman, dressed, madonna like, in white with a blue veil) divides the ship's directional crystals between the crew members. All of the members pursue their own visions: an aesthete (who apparently finds paradise after climbing up a ladder to a Stubbs painting), a materialist (a nasty inventor of polluting industries), and a physician (who teaches children how to overcome difficulties through cooperation).

The Commander is left alone to meet "the natives." They stare at her. She stares at them. They start to wiggle. She retreats, a little. The program states that "their meeting provokes violent and passionate reactions." The music gets louder (not more intense, just louder), the male natives take off their shirts and about half have intercourse with the Commander. A post-coital epiphany transfigures them. Emerging energized, they begin to dominate their less experienced brothers. A master race is created, the carriers of culture. Sex with alien lady sparks human civilization.

Act Two is in three scenes. On a disjointed ecclesiastical plaza dominated by an off-center monumental cross, Columbus prepares to leave Spain, surrounded by the Spanish court (which, for some reason, includes four popes). The opera's principal soprano appears as Queen Isabella. She pronounces her benediction upon the voyage and her court disperses, the set breaking apart to represent the deck of the Santa Maria (the cross, now serving as a mast, again dominates the scene). The first mate sings from the mast's

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beam, and Columbus ruminates on his quest. He has visions.

As either Queen Isabella or the Blessed Virgin, the soprano reappears to Columbus (switching between a gilded crown and a blue veil for the different roles). First Isabella comes to him reminding him of his voyage's purpose. He sees monsters in the sea. The Blessed Virgin appears, telling him that as she "felt in her belly a stirring, and held fast to the faith that this was God" so too ought Columbus cling similarly to his own vision. The monsters come back (more percussion in the orchestra for the boogie men). The queen comes back. Finally the Blessed Virgin returns. But now she commands the admiral to worship her as his true queen and his "one true god." At the base of the mast/cross they have sex. (One wonders if the Reader's Digest foundation, which supported the commission, knew what they were paying for.) The first mate cries out "Tierra!" The scene quickly changes and landfall is made. Two naked West Indians advance with peace offerings, and Columbus shoots them dead.

In Act Three we move to the year 2092. The directional crystals from the prologue have been rediscovered and an expedition is launched, returning the descendants of the original extraterrestrial visitors to their home planet. Humankind has begun a new voyage of discovery.

The Epilogue presents Columbus on his death bed. Queen Isabella appears to him in a vision and prepares to escort him to the "spiritual kingdom where she already resides." She ridicules his voyage as being Satanic, born of his own pride, and invites Columbus to have sex with her. He declines (having already had sex with the Queen of Heaven, sex with the Queen of Spain holds no interest for him), and sings, "Exploration will make obsolete even the sins of the explorer." He dies and is transported to the stars, apparently to continue his quest.

The Met's second commission under Levine, John Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles*, premiered on December 14, 1991 to an ecstatic house. Like Glass, Corigliano and his librettist William Hoffman chose to people their opera with a mixture of historic and fictional characters. Marie Antoinette, Louis XVI, the playwright Beaumarchais, and a gaggle of aristocrats inhabit a kind of Greek netherworld in which their principle condition is boredom. The former queen is melancholy, and Beaumarchais decides to win her love by amusing her with an opera. He conjures up the characters of his past works: Figaro, Susanna, Cherubino, the Count and Countess Almaviva, and others. With this opera within an opera performed by fictionalized ghosts and ghostly fictions, Corigliano and Hoffman spin what has to be one of the most convoluted plots in a genera known for byzantine complexity. (The Met managed to summarize the plot of *Götterdämmerung* in one program page; it takes two to get through *Ghosts*.)

Basically, the ghost of Beaumarchais desires the ghost of Antoinette, and sets to win her by changing history, using his fictional characters to first liberate her from the Revolution and then transport them to the New World. The plan fails only because the queen decides to accept her fate. Yet, recognizing that the playwright risked his soul in attempting to change history, Antoinette bestows a passionate kiss upon him at her own point of self-transcendence, and she finds "herself with Beaumarchais in paradise"—according to the program notes (it's not quite so clear in the staging). No mention is made of what happens to husband Louis.

The two operas have very different sorts of music. Glass's score is tiresome to the point of irritation. There is rarely any significant relation between the music played and text being sung, the character singing, or the dramatic situation (the music of different scenes could be switched without significantly changing the piece). Glass's vocal lines are little more than parlando recitative, serviceable for getting across the text yet unworthy of being remembered. But like it or not, there is a face to Glass's music. It has a character with its own logic and its own intelligence. And there is a conviction to his insistent rhythms and ritornelli. In hearing the score one recognizes the presence of an artist—perhaps not a very profound artist or an artist one even likes, but an artist nonetheless. Glass is a composer who honestly demands to be heard, and should be heard, at least once.

But in Corigliano's score, it's hard to tell which composer we're hearing. Throughout the opera, Corigliano rummages through a grab bag of musical devices and, depending upon the situation, pulls out the appropriate gadget. For spooks, he gives us a little Penderecki or some Lukas Foss. The presence of Figaro requires the invention of some rather lead-footed Rossini. The ensembles are reminiscent of Mozart (or sometimes built directly upon Mozart's works). Richard Strauss, Puccini, Ligeti, and even Benjamin Britten make their appearances. With so many faces, Corigliano's score eventually becomes little more than a parade of skillfully contrived masks, leaving us to wonder which one represents the real face of the composer. Some of the masks are delightful; Cherubino and the Countess's first act duet (which begins with Mozart's "Voi, che sapete") and the Straussian *Miserere* ensemble from Act II are entertaining and moving music. But they are still masks. All in all, *Ghosts* is ultimately less a composition than a facile pastiche where posturing replaces conviction.

Yet there is one area in which both works speak openly, directly, and forcefully, a similarity made all the more striking by the composers' obvious differences. Both works are united by the importance of

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sex. For Glass, Corigliano, and their librettists, sex isn't just fun, or interesting, or a way of preserving the race, or the seal of love between a husband and a wife, or even naughty. It is rather the ultimate means of self-revelation and transcendence. Luther knew he existed because he was redeemed. Descartes knew he existed because he thought. For Glass and Corigliano, we know we exist because we screw. This sex is not the sex between lovers that propagates the species and provides the life blood of culture. This is sex itself: orgasm as transfiguration.

Columbus' moment of transcendence is when he has sex with the Blessed Virgin, an act from which he rises to begin the European domination of the Americas with murder. The Commander's moment of transcendence is when she, like a queen bee, copulates with the natives and thus gives birth to the master race that will eventually return to her own planet (guided by throbbing directional crystals). Marie Antoinette achieves transcendence in a passionate kiss with Beaumarchais and enters into orgasmic eternity with her lover. This is not a world without sin: Columbus is an assassin, industrialists are polluters, Marie Antoinette is an adulteress. But in this postmodern world sins are neither forgiven nor punished, they are simply made "obsolete."

Of course, sex has always been a part of opera. The genera was born out of the extravagant entertainments staged for Renaissance nuptial celebrations. But when sex is exulted, it is usually exulted as an aspect of love. When it is not, tragedies unfold. (There are exceptions to this general rule, of course; both Monteverdi's *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* and Mozart's *Cosi fan tutte* come to mind.)

No one is better at plotting out the courses of these tragedies than Wagner. Tannhäuser finds himself divided, torn between his lust for Venus and his love for Elisabeth. Unable to integrate his personality, he is unable to win either, and is saved upon his death only by an act of divine grace. Unlike Tannhäuser, Siegfried's personality is undivided; passion, love, and life purpose are united in his desire for Brünnhilde—his erotic lust for her fully meshed with his conjugal love. It is this complete integration of his personality that makes Siegfried a hero—not his killing of the dragon. And it is this that makes his betrayal and eventual murder by the psychological puppet Hagen all the more tragic. Tristan and Isolde's adulterous love results in a tragedy for all at hand, yet Wagner is able to close the work with some of the most ecstatic music ever written, not because their adultery is forgotten or ignored, but rather because King Mark has generously forgiven them both. The *Liebestod* is a paean to forgiveness as well as conjugal ecstacy.

It is instead, however, the sacrament of orgasm that seals Glass's Columbus in fidelity with the Blessed Virgin and that opens his eyes to the New World. And Beaumarchais and Marie Antoinette's heaven is a sexual one where their adultery is made irrelevant by their physical passion (poor Louis simply disappears from the plot). Yet these adulterers lack the dedication of even Tristan and Isolde. Ultimately their passion is not for someone else, for some one *other*, but for themselves—and not themselves as a couple, as the lovers Beaumarchais and Antoinette (for that would require the ethic of commitment), but rather for themselves as single individuals, as lone empires of the self where the greatest orgasm is ultimately solitary. At the end of *Voyage*, Columbus ignores Isabella's invitations to her bed, not out of a sense of ethical outrage, but simply because he only desires himself more.

Sex is the core of the postmodern *homo erectus appetitus*, a thing (not a creature, for he acknowledges no *creator*) who walks and talks like a man but whose ethic is but appetite and whose language the syntax of brute feeling.

And so the postmodern *homo erectus appetitus* finds his paradise in his sacrament of sex. Sex is his liturgy and his philosophy. It is what he praises in his poetry, hallows in his architecture, and chronicles in his history. All the encumbrances of the Western tradition regulating sex—the discipline of contracts, the dance of courtship, the love of marriage, even the payment due the prostitute—are jettisoned. They have no place in this aesthetic culture. This is a world of feelings, of desires, of wants, and of the power to grasp satiation.

The Met's two new operas clearly proclaim this postmodern creed. And it is a profoundly different creed than that upon which the Met's other repertory is based (Baroque, Classic/Romantic, or Modern). It is by means of that other creed that we recognize the poignancy of the Countess Almaviva's forgiveness of her adulterous husband (in Mozart's *Figaro*), or weep with Wotan when his own ethics force him to abandon his beloved daughter on an Alpine rock (in Wagner's *Die Walküre*), or cheer with Leonore when Florestan is rescued (in Beethoven's *Fidelio*), or agonize with Captain Vere as he struggles with the riddle of good and evil (in Britten's *Billy Budd*). In the creed of Glass and Corigliano, none of those works are sensible. If they cause him to suffer, why doesn't Wotan simply ignore the runes carved on his spear and substitute new ones for the situation at hand? Why does Leonore risk her life for Florestan when divorce and remarriage would be so easy? And why is Florestan imprisoned at all?

The Voyage and *Ghosts* are artifacts of a different moral world than that of *Fidelio*, *The Ring*, and *The Marriage of Figaro*—a world where forgiveness, sacrifice, justice, and discipline have little currency. Here discipline is only choosing between competing pleasures, justice whatever feels good at the moment, and religion the cult of sensuality. Corigliano's phantoms are bored; they seek not redemption from their

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predicament, but entertainment in it. For Glass, Columbus' voyage is not only an adventure, but also an intellectual quest, fueled by the lust for discovery as well as personal glory. These ghosts and that Columbus are citizens of an infantile world, where religion and ethics have been reduced to mere aestheticism, where the human personality has been collapsed into little more than a mouth and tentacles.

The Met's two commissions mark a major addition to the culture of the postmodern aesthetic. I do not mean to suggest that either Maestro Levine or the Met administration consciously calculated this assault upon traditional Western values through their commissioning program (although the sacrilege of *The Voyage* was certainly a deliberate attack upon the sensibilities of Christians). The late Jacob Druckman had been asked by the Met to write an opera based on the Medea story, and had that project not miscarried, the Met's record might look more balanced. Given the character of our times, however, it was probably inevitable that sooner or later the Met would make its contribution to the postmodern mix.

But this contribution is unlike others. The Met is not the Dayton Ballet or even the Chicago Symphony. Glistening across its plaza, with its glowing Chagalls and sparkling facade, the Metropolitan Opera reigns as the West's premiere institution of the performing arts. And it is a uniquely American kind of reign, based not upon an ancient tradition (as in Dresden) or upon a federal subsidy (like Paris), but rather squarely upon the quality of its performances and the patronage of individual citizens. Singers' careers begin with their Metropolitan debut, no matter if they have sung before in Milan or London or St. Petersburg. To have sung at the Met is to have entered fully into the mainstream of Western art music. Not to have sung there is to be relegated to the sidelines.

With these two commissions, the postmodern aesthetic has entered the mainstream of Western high culture. Of course the phenomenon is not new: C. S. Lewis warned us of it half a century ago when he wrote of the dangers of "men without chests." And it can be argued that it has been an important part of rock culture since the birth of rock and roll. But in the arena of high culture, and certainly high musical culture, the phenomenon was until the past decade largely confined to our culture's fringes, the stuff of some literary journals, a few seminars at the University of Minnesota, conferences of cognoscenti, and gatherings of whatever at the moment passed for the radical chic.

It is at the fringes no longer. It has made its Met debut. It has triumphed Up Town. The postmodern aesthete, that *homo erectus appetitus*, this featherless biped possessed of desires and wants, who makes contracts of convenience and who is vacant of love but vibrant with lust—this is very much the man of the hour. When social historians look for the time when this originally "antiestablishment" world was finally awarded the robes of cultural dominance, they might do well to look to the premieres of these works at the Met. From that perspective, they may prove to be the most enduring legacy of Maestro Levine's first twenty-five years. FT

CARDINAL FAULHABER ON THE COMING OF THE CHRIST CHILD. Why was our Savior born so late in time? "My Father worketh until now . . ." (John 5:17). In carrying into effect the divine economy of salvation there is no interruption, but neither is there precipitation. There is no loitering, but neither is there impetuous haste. The Man-God was born only when the light of the messianic prophecies had shone through a long Advent and the world was ready to receive its Savior and its King. Ask no longer, then, why our Savior was born so late! He was to be not only the dew from heaven and the gift from on high, but the "fruit of the earth" (Isaiah 4:2) and was to "bud forth" from the earth (Isaiah 45:8). He was not to speed to earth like a shaft, but to "bud forth" slowly from the earth like a plant. . . . At the same time pagan Humanity had first to endure the wretchedness of being separated from God and brood over all the bitterness of that state. . . . The educative activity of Divine Providence needed time for its accomplishment. That is why our Savior was born so late in time.

—from *Juifs et chrétiens devant le racisme* (1935)

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Books In Review

Jeremiah in South Dakota

THE CLOISTER WALK. By Kathleen Norris. *Riverhead Books. 304 pp. $23.95.*

***Reviewed by* Molly Finn**

THE FIRST TIME I read *The Cloister Walk* I was somewhat interested, somewhat irritated. The fact that Kathleen Norris—a married, Protestant poet transplanted from New York City to a small town on the plains of South Dakota—is an oblate in a Benedictine monastery piqued my curiosity. Her detailed account of monastic life during several prolonged stays more than satisfied this curiosity, and I was tempted to feel that I had learned rather more about the author's life than I wanted to know. Most interesting were her descriptions of certain aspects of monastic liturgy, particularly the place that liturgical reading of Scripture came to play in her life. Most irritating were some knee-jerk radical feminist passages and a few oversimplified, highly conventional criticisms of American culture surprising to find in the work of someone who usually looks at the world with remarkably little prejudice.

I had read Norris' previous book, *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography,* and enjoyed the way she consistently unites the exalted and the mundane, finding manifestations of the holy in the most ordinary events and objects. In *The Cloister Walk* she identifies this view of the world with her vocation as a poet, developing at length her belief that the calling of the monk and the poet, the prophet and the poet, are similar as they reveal the mission of the "necessary other," the one who recognizes the "transformative power hiding in the simplest things." Prophets "make us look at the way things really are; they don't allow us to deny our pain." Poets express what people have "long desired to articulate but lack the words to do so."

These insights are embedded in an autobiographical narrative that sometimes swept me along quite effectively and sometimes made me ask, "Why should I be interested in the details of *her* life, *her* little town in South Dakota, *her* marriage?" If I have to ask those questions I said to myself, this book is a failure, and I sat down to write an "on the one hand, and on the other hand" review. Something wouldn't let me do it.

MOLLY FINN *is a writer living in New York City.*

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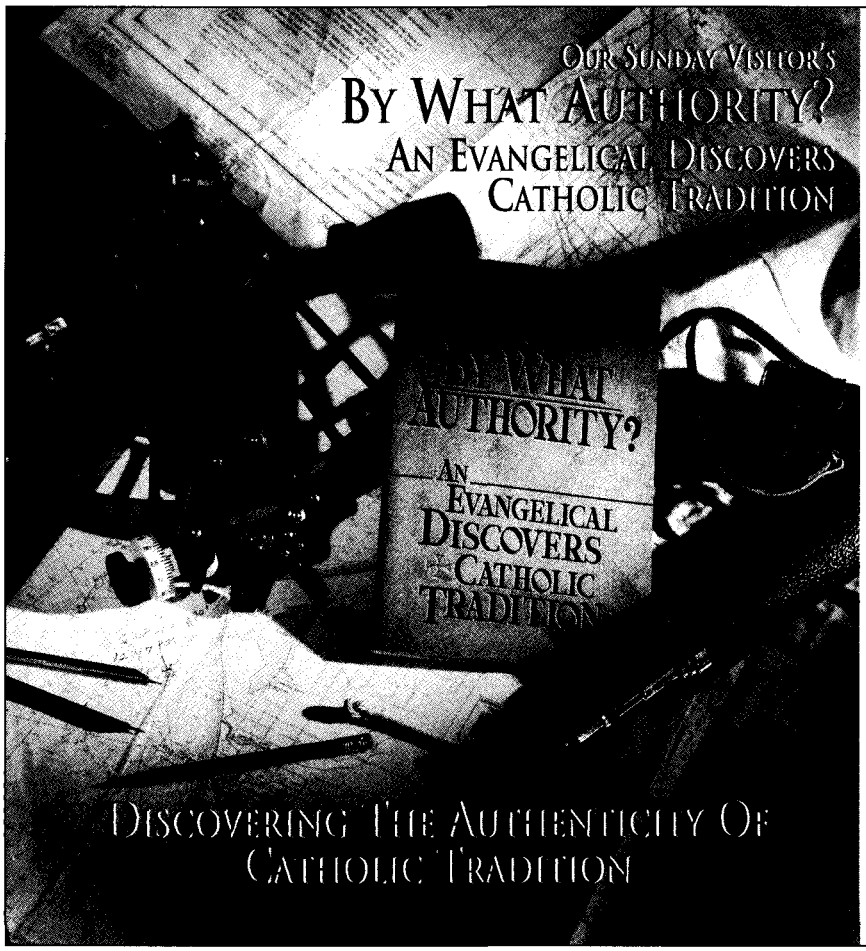
Thirty pages or so into my second reading, I discovered what is remarkable about *The Cloister Walk.* The entire book is a prayer. One of Norris' definitions of prayer is "being ourselves before God." In this book Kathleen Norris opens herself to receive the word of God and to send it forth into the world. This is what she learned as a lector in the Benedictine monastery where she stayed: "The liturgy of the Word is prayer. You pray the Scriptures with, and for, the people assembled, and the words go out to them, touching them in ways only God can imagine. The words are all that matter, and you send them out as prayer, hoping to become invisible behind them."

As a human being, of course, she doesn't always manage to become invisible behind the words. But, true to her vocation as a "necessary other," she does her best to "see things as they really are"; she makes the effort and takes the time to make fruitful connections between her own flawed perceptions and stormy emotional life and the lessons to be learned from Scripture, from the liturgy and discipline of monastic life, above all from the pursuit of what Gregory of Nyssa saw as "our lifelong task to find out what part of the divine image God has chosen to reveal in us . . . [to know] what our primary faults and temptations are, as well as our gifts—not that we might better 'know ourselves,' or in modern parlance, 'feel good about ourselves,' but in order that we might become instruments of divine grace for other people, and eventually return to God."

Seen in this light, the personal revelations and the efforts to draw the reader into her life become part of Norris' struggle to sanctify her life and put it in harmony with the insights gained from her intense engagement in liturgy and Scripture. A fascinating section on the prophet Jeremiah gives the flavor of the intensity of this experience. Norris relates her encounters with Jeremiah in an account of the Benedictine practice of *lectio continuo,* the reading aloud of the entire New Testament every year, the psalms in a continuous cycle throughout the year, other whole books of the Bible, a section at a time, at morning and evening prayer.

Listening to Jeremiah every morning from late September through mid-November "is one hell of a way to get your blood going in the morning: it puts caffeine to shame." "On [some] days I became angry or was reduced to tears, perhaps a promising sign that something of Jeremiah's grief had broken through my defenses." She quotes a fellow listener as saying "most people have no idea what's in the Bible, and they come unglued." To Norris, "Coming unglued came to seem the



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point of listening to Jeremiah."

SHE GOES ON to reflect on the prophet's role as a mirror in which we see reflected the horror and violence, "the fault lines hidden beneath the comfortable surface of the worlds we invent for ourselves." Passionate, bitter, angry, fearful, and grief-stricken as a prophet, a "necessary other," Jeremiah also speaks out of a hope for justice, challenging those who hear him to reflect on the world around them and on the hidden places in their lives.

Norris does not take this message lightly. "The voice of Jeremiah is compelling, often on an overwhelmingly personal level. One morning, I was so worn out by the emotional roller coaster of Chapter 20 that after prayers I walked to my apartment and went back to bed." She refers to "the months that we took his body blows" and says Jeremiah "led me into the heart of pain." Through the pain Jeremiah brought her, Norris looked long and hard at her life and her calling, and "the liturgy became a place where the prophet . . . could help me understand my own life, my vocation as a poet. . . . The monastic liturgy plunges you into Scripture in such a way that, over time, the texts invite you to commune with them, and can come to serve as a mirror." At the end of an excruciating process of self-examination, Norris is able to write, "In naming myself as a 'necessary other,' I finally accept the cross of myself, a burden I've carried ever since childhood, and felt so acutely in my teens. The cross of difference, of being outside, always other. But now, I am free to take it on."

There is no aspect of the author's life that escapes scrutiny in this book, and different readers will discover different aspects of Norris' experience that correspond to some need, experience, or special interest of their own. It is illuminating to see Scripture through the eye of a poet, so alive and alert to image and metaphor. The spiritual geography of the author's corner of the world in Lemmon, South Dakota, may make some readers more conscious of the opportunities for knowledge, growth, and doing God's work that any environment provides, if they have the spirit to see it.

"*Ora et labora*, pray and work, is a Benedictine motto, and the monastic life aims to join the two. This perspective liberates prayer from God-talk; a well-tended garden, a well-made cabinet, a well-swept floor, can be a prayer." What I appreciate most about *The Cloister Walk* is Norris' unfailing recognition that nothing is too earthbound to be sacred. From the vivid, concrete images in the psalms through the touching descriptions of services in her local Presbyterian church, where the preacher starts his sermon by thanking God for last night's

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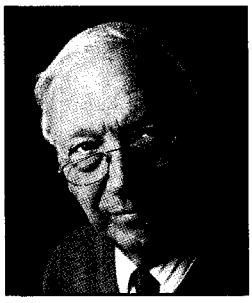

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rain, from the baking of bread to the consecration of the host, Kathleen Norris celebrates God's presence in this world.

Performing the Scriptures

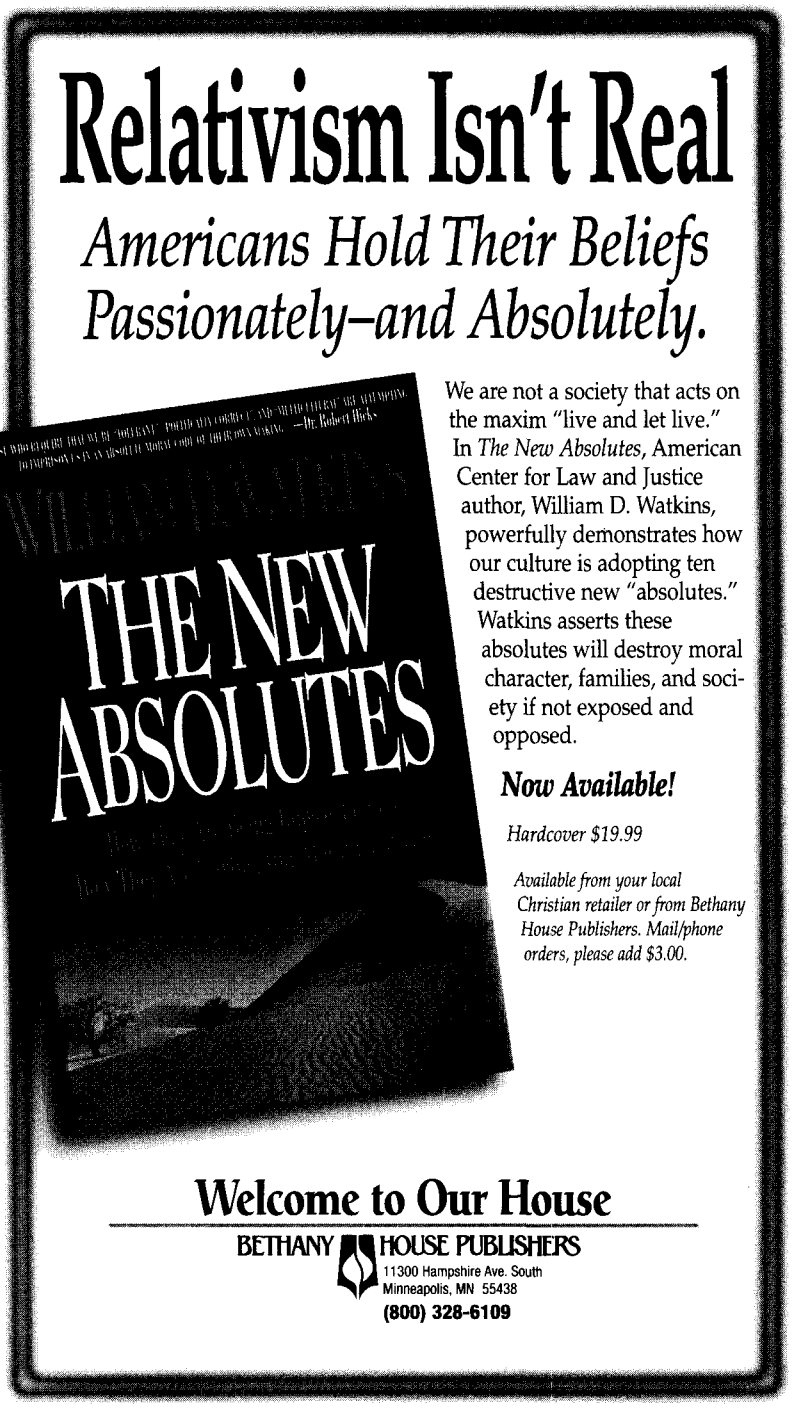
VIRTUOSO THEOLOGY: THE BIBLE AND ITS INTERPRETATIONS. By FRANCES YOUNG. *Pilgrim Press. 198 pp. $15.95 paper.*

***Reviewed by* Paul M. Blowers**

IN AUGUST 1995, in a crowded hall at Oxford, Frances Young reflected on her scholarly and religious pilgrimage. Journeying from the theological impasse of historicism to a rediscovery of the mystery and spiritual power of the Bible, this one-time contributor to *The Myth of God Incarnate* has produced in recent years several ambitious studies of the early Church. In part, *Virtuoso Theology* —which looks to the theological exegesis of the Church Fathers for help in appropriating the Bible today—follows a general trend in contemporary patristic studies, taking early Christian biblical interpretation seriously and rejecting the view of the Fathers as ruthless allegorizers in a hapless "pre-critical" age. But the book is no mere apology for the Fathers. It is a theology of Scripture and an appeal for a renewed "sacramental" view of Scripture, investigating a set of classic issues—authority, canonicity, tradition, the doctrinal content of Scripture, inspiration, etc.—as they once again challenge the Church in postmodern times.

The organizing principle of *Virtuoso Theology* is the analogy of "performance" (the book was originally released in England as *The Art of Performance: Towards a Theology of Holy Scripture*). The analogy is not new. The theological roots of a "performance" hermeneutic go back to the work of, among others, Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar—though Young would say that it was certainly incipient in the Fathers, indeed in the Bible itself. Nicholas Lash and David Ford, among more recent scholars, have also helped to give "performance" greater theological credibility. Simply put, the analogy signals the fact that Christians have never merely interpreted the Bible in the sense of mechanically extracting an inherent, objective meaning from it. As Christians struggle with new social contexts and try to merge the world of Scripture with their own, the Bible comes to life precisely as they "perform" it afresh. Like good music or good drama, there is always room for diverse interpretation-in-performance, for "improvisation."

PAUL M. BLOWERS *is Associate Professor of Church History at Emmanuel School of Religion in Johnson City, Tennessee.*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But the question remains, What will constitute authentic performance true to sacred writ? What are the criteria of authenticity? Are they fixed by the texts themselves, by a traditional rule of faith, or by the "strategies" of religious communities? For Young, historical criticism has at least helped us to understand the constraints on, and humanity of, Scripture. Discovering that the Christian biblical canon did not fall from heaven but was a "messy human business" frees us to appreciate the Bible's integrity and resilience as a "classic repertoire" of diverse writings that survived ongoing re-performance in communities that quoted them, alluded to them, and developed "classic" readings of them. The authority of the canon did not develop prior to the authority of communities and of their traditions.

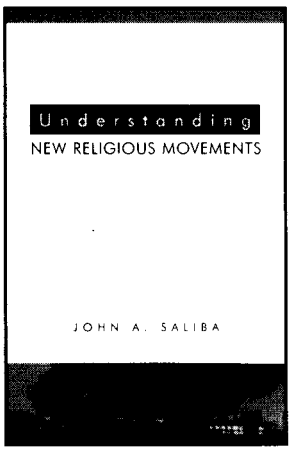
But this only leads us deeper into the quest for authentic performance. A biblical canon can no more impose its own "unitive framework" on interpretation than a musical repertoire can direct its performance. Without an overarching framework there can be no authenticity or fidelity.

ENTER THE Church Fathers. It was Irenaeus of Lyons in the second century who—together with Tertullian, Origen, and others in the creative era when the Christian Bible was still in formation—sought an authoritative framework for performing the Scriptures by appealing to a Rule of Faith (*regula fidei*). In many of its versions in early Christian writers, the Rule appears as a portrait of the work of the Trinity in creation, incarnation, redemption, and consummation—a summary of what Scripture, in all its tensions and complexities, is really about.

According to Young, the Rule of Faith, which these early theologians claimed had been handed down from the apostles, was not the self-evident framework built into Scripture. It was rooted, to be sure, in traditional readings of Scripture emerging in the first and second centuries. But the Rule as elicited particularly by Irenaeus was itself already a kind of performance that engaged the interpreter's own selection and "virtuosity." Indeed, with Irenaeus that performance was backed by a full theological vision centered on Christ's incarnation as a "recapitulation" of God's purposes for the world.

It is this virtuosity that Young desires to recapture for Christian interpretation today. Her challenge is all the greater because of the profound fragmentation of the Church to which the classic repertoire of Scripture belongs; but diversity of perspective is vital to the process for Young. The threat of a "tyranny of frameworks" of interpretation was present even in the early Church.

Understanding
NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS
JOHN A. SALIBA



From Jonestown to Waco, from the Unification Church to Scientology, new religious movements — or "cults," as they are often and pejoratively called — are constantly in the news. Few books from a Christian background are anything but hostile to the vast expansion of these new ways of expressing religious sentiment. But *Understanding New Religious Movements* is different. John A. Saliba, who has been writing on new religious movements since 1976, here offers a dispassionate, balanced analysis of new religions.

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Although Paul and Irenaeus managed to uphold the integrity of the Scriptures (Old Testament) while reinterpreting them in the light of Jesus Christ, subsequent generations facilely "flattened" the Hebrew Scriptures by collapsing everything into a typology or prophecy of Christ—resulting in a disastrous Christian triumphalism, especially toward the Jews. Of course, Christ is "in some sense" the end of the Scriptures, but his incarnation is the reversal which leads us toward the end, "the ending yet not the ending." Scripture does not provide us with the absolute "ending" of the story: we are seekers, pilgrims toward a mysterious finality, not definitive finders.

The heart of *Virtuoso Theology* is Young's recommendation of strategies from patristic biblical interpretation that can enable modern Christians to recognize that the Bible is really about a gospel persuading and leading souls into spiritual mysteries transcending the human constraints of Scripture. Its authority is "neither intrinsic to it nor simply accorded it by the believing community, but [lies] in its persuasive and converting power." Young's analysis will perhaps be more satisfactory to teachers of spirituality than to systematic theologians, but she gives an elegant and compelling account of the manner in which the Fathers read the Bible with a view to the spiritual connections holding the texts together and drawing the reader in. There is much here to commend to contemporary Christian communities destitute of models by which to "reenact" the Bible's rich narrative "score" in liturgy, sacraments, preaching, ethics, and ministry.

If Young's book disappoints at all, it is in her insistence on the categorical impossibility of identifying any stabilizing doctrinal groundwork of interpretation within the Bible itself. "Scripture itself," she concludes, "provides paradigms of pilgrimage, of progress and setback, of faith and hope, rather than concepts, doctrines, or definitions." To many it will seem an odd proposal that the Bible may lead toward the mysteries of the Trinity and Christ, but is not somehow *in the first instance* about those mysteries. Young rightly criticizes any facile hermeneutical circle between the Bible and the Church's doctrines, but her study lacks a straightforward statement of what the genuine first principles of interpretative performance would look like.

Young is at last committed, however, to an essentially sacramental and "Chalcedonian" perspective on the Bible: two natures, divine and human, in one text. The convergence of those two natures is a mystery analogous to the mystery of the person of Jesus Christ. As the Word

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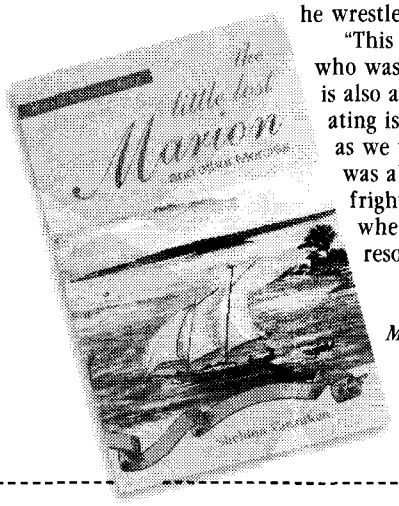

"This is the story of a frightened young girl, who was later my wife, Davy, and is now dead. It is also a way of looking at a divisive and infuriating issue right-side-up instead of upside down, as we usually see it. My book *A Severe Mercy* was about Davy, but the story of her being a frightened young girl was not in it because, when it was written in 1976, there was no resolution to it, only a beginning."

--Sheldon Vanauken, *Chapter One*

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incarnate in Jesus assumed human diversity into his own person, so the Word "incarnate" in Scripture is able to assume the human limitations of Scripture—the Church must conversely struggle through those limitations to achieve intimacy with the person of the Word. Meanwhile, every interpretative performance fails to capture both the divinity and the humanity; we are left to improvise as faithfully as possible amid the inherent indeterminacy of meaning. Virtuosity and mystery belong together. As Young forcefully concludes, ultimately Christ himself challenges every presumption of a "definitive" performance. What remains to be seen from Young's book, however, is how Christ's sacramental incarnation in the Scriptures itself functions as criterion, and how his mysterious presence there (concomitant with the Spirit's mysterious indwelling of the Church) can inspire our own performance.

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Religion in a Public Voice

RELIGION AND MEDICAL ETHICS: LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD. Edited by ALLEN VERHEY. *Eerdmans. 160 pp. $18.*

***Reviewed by* Gilbert Meilaender**

As BIOETHICS has gained coherence as a discipline in recent years, it has given rise to a number of attempts to take stock of the nature and health of that discipline. Perhaps this is natural, since the birth of bioethics is now more than a quarter century behind us. Among the questions that call for attention is the role of religion and theology in bioethical discussion and argument, and the essays collected in this volume make helpful contributions to that question.

In 1968, rather near the birth of bioethics, the Institute of Religion in Texas sponsored a conference on Ethics in Medicine and Technology at which major addresses were given by well-known religious thinkers—Robert Drinan, Joseph Fletcher, Paul Ramsey, and Helmut Thielicke. In 1993, to remember and celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of that occasion, the Institute of Religion sponsored another conference. Where the first conference simply featured a number of religious thinkers as speakers, this conference focused on the increasing (or at least increasingly perceived) "marginalization" of religious voices in public discussion of bioethical issues. How shall religious voices best enter into *public* discussion of bioethics? This volume collects the major essays presented at the conference—by David H. Smith, Stephen Lammers, Karen Lebacqz, Stanley Hauerwas, James Gustafson, and Warren Reich.

How should religious voices enter publicly into bioethical discussion? As James Gustafson points out, some religious thinkers may enter on their own terms, defending the unique contribution of religious language to public reflection, and refusing to "translate" this language even for purposes of public discussion. Others may adopt a contrasting approach—seeking to make their views understandable by translating them into terms that seem to carry less religious freight and are thought to be more intelligible by the general public. These contrasting positions are, of course, simply the echo of views that have contended with each other at different points in Christian history and have been a staple of argument over the last several decades within the academy.

A third position delineated by Gustafson is harder to characterize. Although warning labels should probably be used whenever one proposes to use the word "dialectical," this third position is characterized by Gustafson as a "dialectical interaction" that seeks "to move from intelligibility to some kind of justification." That is, one might attempt to enlarge the scope of religious language—neither insisting on carrying one's traditional religious talk into public discussion nor simply translating it into what may be the common currency of discussion. Hence, one seeks to use religious language in public argument, but it is already a language that has been broadened in ways that may make it more intelligible to those who are not themselves traditional believers.

I take Warren Reich's essay as an attempt to do the sort of thing Gustafson's third approach depicts. Developing a rich phenomenological understanding of moral experience, Reich seeks to erase the distinction between philosophical and theological ethics. The distinction between them "breaks down in the arena of the public search for moral meaning." Rich as the essay is, however, one wonders whether its complications are really all that promising as a contribution to public discussion of medical ethics.

SEVERAL OF THE other papers come down roughly on the side of one or the other of Gustafson's first two options. Stanley Hauerwas (in addition

GILBERT MEILAENDER *holds the Board of Directors Chair in Christian Ethics at Valparaiso University.*

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to providing a witty characterization—for those who knew him—of the late Paul Ramsey) argues that Ramsey's attempt to enter into public argument in bioethics compromised his religious convictions. He simply carried a Christian understanding of *agape* (love or covenant fidelity), relatively detached from its theological context, into medical ethics and then used this love as a principle by which to evaluate and transform the covenants already present in the world of medical care. I myself think this critique misses some ways in which Ramsey's thought is rooted in Genesis 1-11 and John 1, but Hauerwas' essay is nonetheless a forceful presentation of a position something like Gustafson's first option.

Stephen Lammers depicts religious voices in bioethics as somewhat marginalized both in the academy and in the worlds of medicine and public policy. He does, however, discern a critique of this marginalization beginning to appear at some places in the academy, a critique still largely unknown in the medical world. While Hauerwas seems almost to recommend such marginalization, Lammers does not necessarily see it as cause for celebration. It is a price that may sometimes have to be paid for religious integrity, but it need not be sought on general principles. The larger worry for Lammers—and it is a worry worth pondering—is that religious voices in public may be heard simply as another "interest group." The good they accomplish may be outweighed by the loss of their peculiar identity.

David Smith is less inclined to think religion has been marginalized in bioethical discussion, although that may be because he works with a general notion of correlating religious concepts with key terms more generally used in public debate. This move places him in the second option outlined by Gustafson, and I am not sure Smith develops his notion of "paired concepts" in sufficient detail for us to decide how useful (or dangerous) such an approach may be. His essay does, however, offer a quick but helpful sketch of some of the religious thinkers who were major players in the early years of the growth of bioethics.

The essay by Karen Lebacqz is harder to classify in Gustafson's terms; perhaps it is actually an extended example of the kind of correlation Smith recommends. She analyzes Helmut Thielicke's concept of "alien dignity" and notes the paradox that we may be more secure with an alien dignity than with one we think we have earned. In particular, she nicely develops the ways in which a concept of alien dignity *protects* us, because it is a dignity that does not have to be earned and cannot be lost, and *equalizes* us, because it is bestowed by God upon all. In

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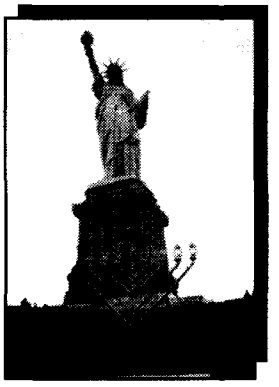

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my judgment she is quite successful in demonstrating how such a distinctively religious concept may still have public purchase and intelligibility.

Those who wonder whether a religious voice can speak religiously in public might ponder Allen Verhey's concluding meditation on Psalm 88. Distinctively religious, the meditation had its place in a worship service. It affirms that "the last word is not darkness," but it does so without denying the depths of human experience of suffering. I do not see why one could not or should not say this in public.

Tough Love

RENEWING AMERICAN COMPASSION: HOW COMPASSION FOR THE NEEDY CAN TURN ORDINARY CITIZENS INTO HEROES. By MARVIN OLASKY. *Free Press. 201 pp. $21.*

Reviewed by **Amy L. Sherman**

AS I WRITE THIS, I am unsettled by thoughts of a boy named Kenneth, a mom named Tina, and a monstrous bureaucracy called HUD. In Oak Ridge Gardens, a low-income neighborhood targeted by my church's urban outreach ministry, there lives eight-year-old Kenneth, son of a crack-addicted mom. He has already seen such unspeakable things that he boasted to me, "I'm going to *do it* with my girlfriend and hurt her real bad." In the neighborhood, I'll see the thirty-year-old Tina, wolfing her lunch between the morning and afternoon jobs she works to support three children. I'll also wrestle with the strictures of HUD—it put up some of the money for the housing project and so, technically, our faith-based family center isn't permitted there.

These encounters at Oak Ridge Gardens reveal the importance and timeliness of Marvin Olasky's *Renewing American Compassion.* The book's strength lies in its practical advice on how to tear down obstacles to private charities (like our church's current struggle with HUD) and its sensible counsel on the kind of tough-minded compassion needed by people like Kenneth's mom. The book's weakness lies in its failure to say enough about how to help the strivers in the ghetto, like Tina.

Renewing American Compassion is the sequel to *The Tragedy of American Compassion,* Olasky's historical account of private charitable activity in the United States in the nineteenth century. In three chapters of the new book, Olasky summarizes the key themes from the earlier volume. He repeats his description of the ways bad charity (the Great Society) drove out good charity (religiously based groups): It reinterpreted the causes of poverty as exclusively material and environmental; its bureaucracy tried to reach ever-larger numbers of poor people with a decreasingly personal strategy for fighting poverty; it dismissed the role of volunteers in favor of professional social workers; and it removed the incentives for work, saving, and marriage. *Renewing American Compassion* also revisits the basic principles of effective compassion outlined in *Tragedy.* Then Olasky offers vignettes of groups that put effective compassion into action and proposes a variety of policy initiatives that would both remove the obstacles that hinder Good Samaritans and promote a reinvigorated initiative by ordinary Americans to alleviate the suffering of their less-fortunate fellows.

OLASKY'S THESIS IS that effective compassion—that is, service that helps people to transform their lives—is challenging, personal, and spiritual. He supports his argument with numerous persuasive anecdotes about individuals who have walked out of the underclass with the help of faith-based, grassroots groups that practice "hard-headed, soft-hearted" compassion. My own research in several inner cities over the past two years confirms Olasky's assertions. Permanent change happens when individuals are given personal attention, emotional support, and moral challenge and are held accountable for their actions.

Today, most participants in the debate about welfare reform—at

AMY L. SHERMAN *is Director of Urban Ministry at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Charlottesville, Va., and author of* Restorers of Streets to Dwell In: Effective Church-Based Ministry Among the Poor *(Crossway, forthcoming).*

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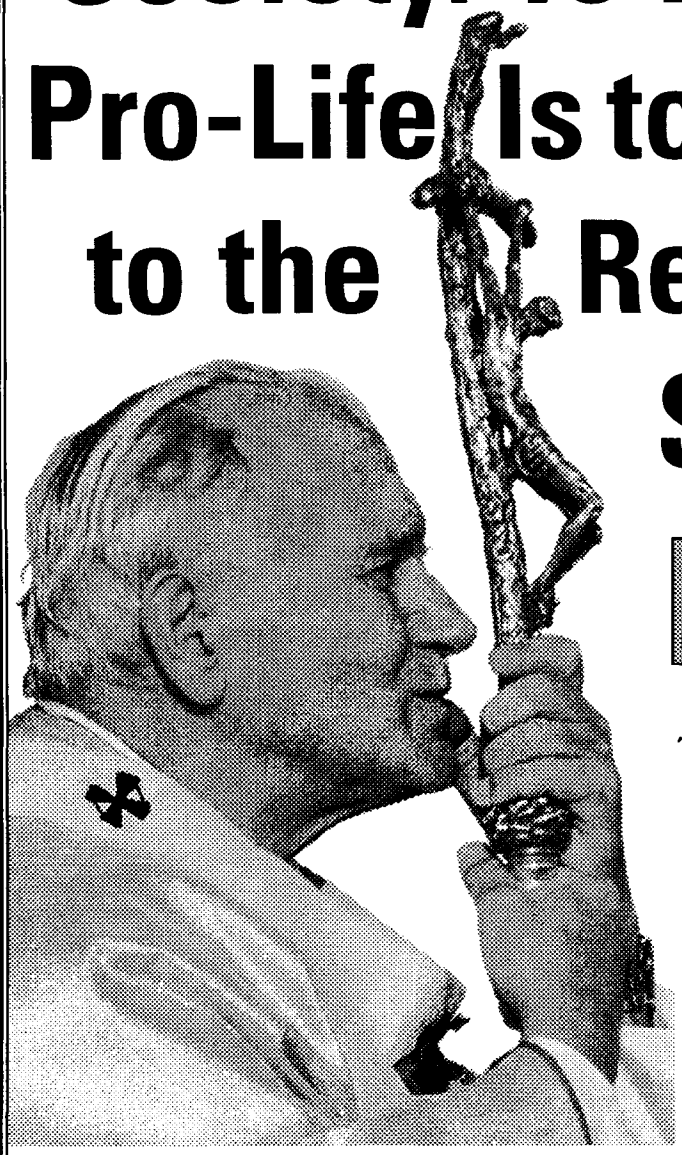

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least those outside the realms of the ACLU and the Children's Defense Fund—agree with Olasky that the government has not and cannot offer this kind of effective compassion, and that consequently we must enlarge the role private charities play in the lives of the underclass. As Olasky notes, some governmental officials are more open today to the proposition that faith-based groups secure better results than do state agencies working with the poor. Politicians in Mississippi, Michigan, and Virginia have gone so far as to plead for the churches' help in reducing the welfare rolls. Given this growing consensus, what's provocative about *Renewing American Compassion* is not that it argues for returning social welfare functions to civil society, but that it dares to offer specific and useful proposals for how this might happen.

Olasky's goal is to "push open the debate" over welfare reform by offering some legislative possibilities. He is most enthusiastic about a tax-credit scheme by which individuals could contribute directly to poverty-fighting organizations and then have their federal tax burden decreased accordingly. This proposal would allow even non-itemizers this deduction and could significantly multiply the resources of grassroots groups. Uncle Sam's receipts would decrease, but that's the idea: Olasky wants the government to abandon its business of *providing* for the general welfare and to redirect its energies toward *promoting* the general welfare by enabling and equipping civil society.

I fully support the tax-credit idea. But Olasky's explanation of how the scheme would work needs one addition to help persuade skeptics. Our tax money goes for more than social services; we're also paying for roads, research, and the national defense. Social welfare spending constitutes a small part of the federal budget, but the decrease in tax revenues that would ensue from this proposal appears rather large. While Olasky generally does a good job of anticipating (and answering) potential objections to his proposals, he needs to explain how the tax-credit scheme can accomplish its goals without jeopardizing other governmental services.

OLASKY ALSO describes, but is less enthusiastic about, such current proposals as Senator John Ashcroft's attempts to provide legal protection to religiously based groups that wish to receive federal monies. Ashcroft's bill allows faith-based groups to compete on an equal footing with secular nonprofit organizations for governmental grants to support social-welfare activities, and it explicitly ensures these groups the right to conduct their outreach without compromising their spiritual character. A clause in the bill prohibits faith-based groups from using governmental money to "proselytize," though, and Olasky fears that this endangers the effective heart of their ministry.

Other politicians want to terminate cash assistance and instead provide poor people with vouchers that could be "redeemed" for social services at private organizations. Olasky adds a dose of realism to this generally good idea. "Some recipients would do fine with vouchers that they could use for any social services," Olasky explains, "but it would be irresponsible to place unconstrained vouchers in the hands of addicts, alcoholics, and others not committed to changing their lives."

Moreover, the organizations to which welfare clients apply for aid are likely to differ in their effectiveness in helping clients achieve a positive, permanent transformation. So Olasky suggests that vouchers to groups that, for example, serve the homeless be designed so as not to pay an organization simply for "warehousing" individuals. A small amount might be paid to organizations that place individuals in transitional housing, and the full amount paid to an organization that helps establish clients in permanent homes.

A few years ago such creative ideas would have had no political life at all. But today Olasky's books have moved the welfare debate to a new plane. The real credit for this, though, as Olasky himself would admit, goes to the frontline poverty fighters he has encountered in the littered streets of Chicago, Dallas, and Los Angeles. By telling their stories, Olasky has injected their wisdom into the debate. If our polit-

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God Talk

DIVINE DISCOURSE: PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE CLAIM THAT GOD SPEAKS. By NICHOLAS WOLTERSTORFF. *Cambridge University Press. 326 pp. $18.95.*

***Reviewed by* Mark R. Talbot**

ONE OF THE most significant features of our humanity is our *addressability*. Indeed, the fact that human beings can be addressed and, especially, that we can be *aware* of being addressed is integral to our becoming full-fledged *persons*, to our becoming agents who not only believe, desire, and feel but who can step away from our beliefs and desires and feelings to ask whether we *ought* to be believing or desiring or feeling those ways.

Two-year-old Rebekah sees her friend Caleb playing with his nice new red ball and decides she wants to play with it. So she starts toward him only to hear her mother say, "Rebekah, that's Caleb's!" In divining her intent and then addressing her so, Rebekah's mother is trying to get her to reconsider her aim. Rebekah's mother hopes that a lot of these little interventions will eventuate in Rebekah's becoming a person who, when she desires something, will think twice before trying to get it.

A large part of what it means to be a person involves learning to "think twice" like this. The "socialization process" aims at getting us to do so by addressing us in various ways. When it succeeds, we become more or less self-regulating; we become persons, in other words, who know they should honor certain norms, and who thus become capable of acting in socially acceptable ways.

In philosophers' jargon, when Rebekah's mother addresses her, she performs an *illocutionary act*. Illocutionary acts are acts such as asking, asserting, commanding, promising, reminding, cautioning, rebuking, and so on. We usually perform them by performing *locutionary acts*, by saying or writing certain words. Rebekah's mother, by saying "Rebekah, that's Caleb's!", means to caution her about how she is about to behave. She means to appeal to Rebekah's sense that some things ought not to be done, and thus to train her not to violate a norm that (among other things) makes for social peace.

If Rebekah's mother is Jewish or Christian or Muslim, then her belief that there are norms that ought not to be violated is probably grounded in a belief that God has said that we ought to govern our beliefs and desires and feelings in specific ways. As an adherent of one of the three "religions of the Book," she probably believes she has a religious duty to address Rebekah because she believes that the God of that Book commands her to teach her children his ways. Her assumption that Rebekah senses that some things ought not to be done is almost surely tied to a belief that God guarantees it by Himself telling Rebekah through her conscience how things should be. If she is fairly sophisticated theologically, then Rebekah's mother may believe that our becoming fully fledged persons depends on God's addressing us, on God's calling us into being as persons by speaking to us in various ways. Indeed, she may believe that a main way in which God speaks to her children is through her speaking to them.

NICHOLAS WOLTERSTORFF'S *Divine Discourse* reflects philosophically and theologically on the claim that the Maker and Sustainer of the universe addresses human beings. It explores the possibility that contemporary speech-action theory opens up "a whole new way of thinking about God speaking," a way that claims that "the attribution of speech to God by Jews, Christians, and Muslims should be understood as the attribution to God of *illocutionary actions*," of specific acts of "commanding, promising, blessing, forgiving, exhorting, assuring, asserting, and so forth," and that God performs these acts especially through the words of sacred Scripture.

The claim that God speaks to human beings is quite different from the claim that God reveals various sorts of things. When "people of the Book" have thought about revelation, they have usually thought of God dispelling our ignorance by disclosing what would otherwise remain hidden—as, for example, disclosing that He has made provision for the forgiveness of our sins. God may do this by deputizing His prophets to make the appropriate claims. So God may reveal things to us through the assertions of those who speak for Him. Yet most illocutionary acts do more than just disclose or reveal hidden truths: specific acts of promising or commanding, for instance, inform us that the

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promiser or commander is taking on duties *toward* us or requiring things *of* us. By them, the promiser or commander becomes personally involved with us in definite ways. So Wolterstorff's topic is both wider and richer than the well-canvassed topic of divine revelation.

It is also more provocative, since it implies certain things about God, language, and the world with which many will disagree. Speech-act theory implies that speakers are accountable for what they say. *Promising*, for instance, is an activity that even God shouldn't engage in if He does not intend to do what He says. Those who subscribe to divine-command theories of moral obligation will probably balk at the notion that God can be obliged to do anything. So Wolterstorff spends a chapter arguing that God's speaking is compatible with such theories.

There is also the problem of specifying how God, since he has no lips and larynx, *can* speak. Wolterstorff devotes several chapters to analyzing how God can speak through human speakers, to arguing that God's speaking in "anything like the range and diversity claimed in the scriptures and traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam almost certainly requires direct intervention by God in the affairs of human history; and contemporary science provides us no good reason for thinking that such intervention does not occur," and to developing the proper principles for interpreting the divine discourse that comes to us through human speech.

Because speech-act theory rises or falls with the credibility of interpreting locutionary acts in terms of the discourser's illocutionary intentions, Wolterstorff also devotes chapters to arguing against Paul Ricoeur's and Jacques Derrida's discourse theories, which deny that we should see texts as instruments of "authorial discourse." Once all this ground-clearing is done, he addresses the more specifically religious issues of the actual illocutionary stance of Scripture. How much of the Gospels, for instance, should we take as asserting that things actually happened as they relate? (Here Hans Frei's claim that only a primarily *sensus literalis* interpretation of the Gospels honors their authors' intentions gets close scrutiny.) He also asks whether we are ever entitled to believe that God has actually spoken to us, either through Scripture or in other ways.

Some of what Wolterstorff says can and should be challenged from various philosophical and theological quarters. Yet this rich book gives substance to the ancient Jewish conviction that God has not left us to ourselves but "speaks to us on our way," and that, accordingly, our spe-

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cial calling is to listen to that speech in order to hear the threats and promises, the commands and blessings, the exhortations and assertions, that God is addressing to human beings.

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PYTHAGORAS' TROUSERS: GOD, PHYSICS, AND THE GENDER WARS. By MARGARET WERTHEIM. *Random House. 279 pp. $23.*

Contrary to what the subtitle night suggest, this book is no feminist screed, but an even-toned, readable, and philosophically astute claim that mathematics (and hence mathematical physics) has always been intertwined with religious and mystical themes. The book opens with Pythagoras, who regarded numbers as divine and founded a religious community to study the mysteries of geometry. Centuries later, many of the early scientists revived the Pythagorean/Platonic tradition and merged it with Christian faith, a blend that inspired Copernicus, Kepler, Newton, and others. Today physics continues to have quasi-religious overtones, as contemporary scientists endow their books with titles such as *The God Particle* and *The Mind of God*. As a secondary thesis, Wertheim argues that this religious dimension explains why the scientific community has historically included so few women. Many of the early scientists regarded themselves as "priests of God" (in Kepler's phrase) and adopted a monastic model excluding women from education and science societies, a practice that continued until surprisingly recently. Wertheim weaves her two theses together persuasively, but more importantly she has produced a rarity: a book of popular science that skillfully treats the deep and enduring association of science and religion.

— Nancy R. Pearcey

MANHOOD IN AMERICA: A CULTURAL HISTORY. By MICHAEL KIMMEL. *Free Press. 544 pp. $30.*

Policy experts are finally persuaded (through earlier books such as David Blankenhorn's *Fatherless in America*) that our most intractable social pathologies follow on the heels of fatherlessness. What we need now is a historical grasp of the reasons for the male flight from family. A flurry of books has appeared in recent years dealing with changes in notions of masculinity through history. Michael Kimmel from the State University of New York believes a seismic shift took place during the industrial revolution. In colonial times, the definition of manhood focused on virtuous character: fulfilling the duties given by one's "station." But the industrial revolution dissolved traditional social structures, cutting men adrift to create their own identities through individual achievement. The moral and communal duties of manhood were muted—precisely those that bind men to families. Moreover, as men began to work in factories and offices, homes grew increasingly mother-centered. Family and domesticity were cast as things to be escaped in order to become a "real" man. These long-term structural effects are described by Kimmel in profuse detail, though better analysis is found in other recent works such as Robert Griswold's *Fatherhood in America* and E. Anthony Rotundo's *American Manhood*. Most scholars working in this area are culturally liberal, and Christians concerned about renewing male commitment to the family would do well to take advantage of the historical data they are uncovering and integrate it into a traditionalist moral framework.

— NRP

THE END OF SCIENCE: FACING THE LIMITS OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE TWILIGHT OF THE SCIENTIFIC AGE. By JOHN HORGAN. *Helix Books/Addison-Wesley. 308 pp. $24.*

These profiles of prominent scientists by a senior staff writer for *Scientific American* are intended to update Gunther Stent's *The Coming of the Golden Age*, a 1969 declaration of the imminent end of science. It didn't quite turn out that way in the 1970s. But here in the 1990s, we're facing another crop of "end-of-science" claims, primarily because of new work in particle physics. What bothers John Horgan is that, in key areas of science, exotic theories are

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spun with no way to test them. It is, for instance, hard to test a theory of parallel universes, when parallel universes are by definition inaccessible. Horgan calls this activity "ironic science." Some of its practitioners, like Stephen Hawking, he believes to be essentially practical jokers. Others, like superstring theorist Edward Witten, seem to imagine their fantastically subtle but untestable ideas are validated by their subtlety. Aside from ironic scientists, Horgan spoke to a number of people who may be doing useful work, but who seem mostly interested in vending cranky metaphysical notions. This is most pronounced among the tub-thumping materialists who probably believe they have no metaphysics at all. Horgan does not deny that his interest in the limits of science is in part religious. His epilogue is entitled "The Terror of God"—as though the Divine Mind, unsupported by anything else and knowing everything there is to know, is actually terrified of the abyss. He asks several people about this idea, including the philosopher Charles Hartshorne, but without much result. Perhaps when the human race reaches the limits of knowledge, it will find itself in a similar situation, but the terror he describes is more likely the result of trying to imagine what God would be like if God were Horgan.

— *John J. Reilly*

God, Cosmos, and Humankind: The World of Early Christian Symbolism. By Gerhart B. Ladner. Translated by Thomas Dunlap. *University of California Press. 334 pp. $45.*

The original German version was entitled *Handbook of Early Christian Symbolism*, and that title better describes this learned and fascinating work. Gerhart Ladner, who is best known for his writings on Christian intellectual history (most notably, *The Idea of Reform*) here gathers together in one volume an unparalleled compendium of the rich and varied world of early Christian symbolism (the lamb and the deer, grapevines and fish, serpents and dragons, creation and cosmos), biblical narratives and parables (Jonah and the whale, the wise and foolish virgins, the Eucharist and apostles receiving communion), the nimbus of saints, the pallium of popes, and much more. Lavishly illustrated and well indexed, the book is a pleasure to consult and easy to use.

— *Robert L. Wilken*

When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor. By William Julius Wilson. *Knopf. 307 pp. $26.*

Wilson gained deserved attention with his 1978 book, *The Declining Significance of Race*, in which he argued that factors related to economic class were more important than racial discrimination in understanding the problems of black Americans. This was followed in 1988 by *The Truly Disadvantaged*, which helpfully focused on the "radical isolation" of the black poor after civil rights laws made possible the flight of more successful blacks from urban centers. The present book incorporates vast amounts of empirical data that Wilson and his many collaborators gathered through a huge research project run out of the University of Chicago, and much of the data will be of lasting interest to scholars. Regrettably, the book is totally unconvincing in its analysis, which ignores cultural, social, and moral factors in its simplistic insistence that the only remedy is jobs, mainly government-generated jobs. In light of Professor Wilson's earlier work, the book is deeply disappointing.

Microcosm and Creator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor. By Lars Thunberg. *Open Court. 488 pp. $29.95 paper.*

There was a time not so long ago when one could be a serious theologian or even a learned scholar of patristics, and yet barely have heard the name of the seventh-century mystic, Maximus the Confessor. Those days are gone, fortunately—swept away by a tide of twentieth-

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century interest in the theological and mystical roots of Maximus' writings. And a significant factor in the new interest was the publication in 1965 of this major study of Maximus' anthropology by a Swedish theologian, Lars Thunberg. Now brought back in a second edition with revisions and updating, *Microcosm and Creator* remains one of the best single works on Maximus, guiding the reader through the saint's life and his complicated analyses of free will, the soul's relation to body, and the "cosmic vocation of humanity."

ROMAN CATHOLIC WORSHIP: TRENT TO TODAY. By JAMES F. WHITE. *Paulist Press. 174 pp. $11.95.*

With absolutely no regard for the mess they make of the liturgical calendar, inconsiderate new saints keep popping up in each new generation of believers. You'd think, Professor White grumbles in this thin book aimed at a popular audience, that any self-respecting church could manage to ensure that it never had any more saints—but then what else can you expect from a Roman Catholic Church that wages "war on women," believes in prayerful contemplation, declines to make interpretive dance a permanent part of the liturgy, and, in general, refuses to behave like a well-mannered maiden aunt of liberal sensibilities gracefully living out her dotage? Professor White is a distinguished scholar of the history of Christian liturgy, but he belongs to that generation of academics who mistook the reforms of Vatican II for a general endorsement of radicalism. And as the boat of Christian history sails away from him, all he can find to do is cast curses at its wake and grouse about how things should have turned out.

CHRISTIANITY FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: THE PROPHETIC WRITINGS OF ALEXANDER MEN. Edited by ELIZABETH ROBERTS and ANN SHUKMAN. *Continuum. 226 pp. $19.95 paper.*

The Russian priest Alexander Men, born in 1935, was viciously murdered by unknown ax-wielding assailants

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in 1990; but in the fifty-five years between he seemed to live a dozen lives: as a witness to the Cross, a stumbling block to his Soviet overlords, a mystic, a preacher, and a major intellectual figure in the tradition of Orthodox theological thought that the Communists struggled for seventy years to destroy. Gathering only a handful of his many essays, lectures, spiritual reflections, and philosophical musings, this collection is more a sampler than an anthology of Father Men's work. But—with an introductory note by the Anglican Bishop of Oxford and an afterword by the Catholic Archbishop of Paris—it should serve to put American readers on notice that a major Christian figure managed to blossom even in the man-made desert of the Soviet Union.

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS. VOLUME 1: THE PERSON AND HIS WORK. By JEAN-PIERRE TORRELL. *Catholic University Press. 407 pp. $39.95 cloth, $25.95 paper.*

When the first volume of Father Torrell's promised two-volume work on St. Thomas Aquinas was published in France in 1993, it was greeted with ecstatic reviews—and, for once, the reason was that the book was so extraordinarily good. Now translated into English by Robert Royal, this is *the* introduction to Thomas: presenting all the known facts of his life and work, tracing the themes of his writing out of his juvenilia, and following the influence of his thought in the years immediately after his death. When the second volume appears (promising to examine in greater detail Thomas' spirituality) the standard study of the Angelic Doctor for our times will be complete.

BROOKLYN! AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY. By ELLEN M. SNYDER-GRENIER. *Temple University Press. 292 pp. $54.95 cloth, $18.95 paper.*

Commissioned by the Brooklyn Historical Society, this lavish book will interest the millions of Americans who trace their roots to the fabled borough, and the three million who live there now. It is perhaps a sign of the times, however, that churches, and religion in general, are largely ignored in an account of the place popularly known for more than a century as "The Borough of Churches." Nor is there mention of the Brooklyn Sunday School Parade, once said to be the largest annual celebration in the nation. Pictures and text leave the reader with the sad impression that the best days of Brooklyn are very much in the past. But then, it's the business of historical societies to celebrate the past.

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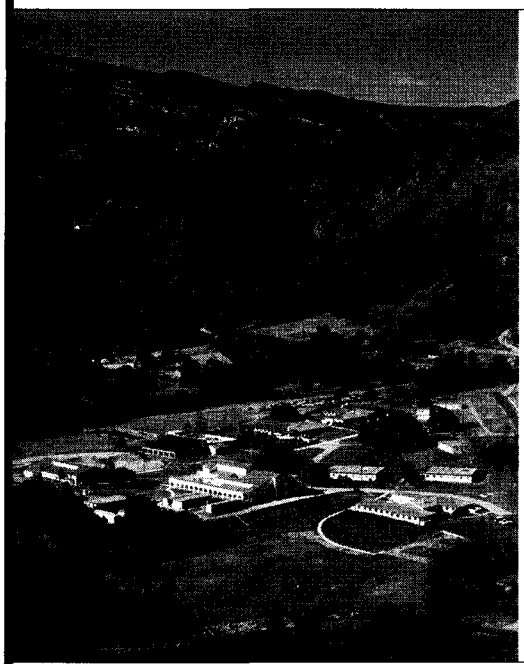

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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

Jews for Jesus, Established A.D. 32

There are hot buttons and then there are nuclear triggers. In the latter category, it is commonly thought, is the question of evangelizing Jews. When, however, the Southern Baptist Convention last summer reaffirmed that there is a Christian mission also to Jews, the reaction from Jewish leadership was generally muted. Most Jews seemed to understand that *of course* that's the position of Baptists and of others who take seriously the universal mandate to share the Gospel of Christ. There were a few complaints about the Baptists "singling out" Jews for evangelistic attention, but that complaint failed to understand that the Baptists were responding to Christian theologians who had singled out Jews as being exempt from the otherwise universal need for the Gospel. If the view gained ground that Muslims, for instance, could be saved apart from Christ, one expects that the Southern Baptist Convention would formally reaffirm the Christian mission to Muslims.

The same question is again agitating our British cousins. "We're Jews, we don't have to apologize for the Holocaust," says David Brickner, international president of Jews for Jesus. His group had put up advertisements in the London Underground: "Jews for Jesus—why not? After all, Jesus is for Jews." This elicited a strong reaction from the Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ), which issued a press release reporting that it "has threatened to expel any of its three thousand members who attempt missionary activity." The Archbishop of Canterbury approved, insisting that Christians "respect the integrity of other faiths." Paul Mendel, director of CCJ, declared, "You have to be either Jewish or Christian. If you try being both it doesn't go down well."

Richard Harvey, the U.K. director of Jews for Jesus, disagrees. "If you had been there at the first Easter event and had been saying the same sort of thing to the disciples, 'Hold on chaps, you must respect the integrity of Judaism as a living religion,' then the Church would never have got started in the first place." The liberal *Tablet* comments: "Shame and silence should overcome every Gentile at the memory of how centuries of Christian anti-Semitism finally led to the genocide of the concentration camps. But what blame can be attached to those *Jews* who wish, with sensitivity, to speak to their own people of their belief that Jesus (whom they call Y'shua) is indeed the longed-for Messiah?"

At the international headquarters in San Francisco, David Brickner has a plaque that reads: "Jews for Jesus, established A.D. 32, give or take a year." He defends his organization against the charge of employing offensive methods. "We don't want to be offensive, but people take offense at the message, and that we can't help. I'm controversial as soon as I say: I'm a Jew and I believe in Jesus." Brickner says the organization contacts Jews through the mail, offering a course on Christianity that takes people step by step, depending upon their interest. It is, he says, tactful, sensitive, and nonthreatening, giving people "a chance to say yes or no at each stage." The *Tablet* comment concludes: "Is this a mission with a hard-sell evangelical edge? Or is it responsible and respectful evangelism?"

Of course the Southern Baptist resolution is not limited to Jews evangelizing other Jews. Like the 1994 declaration "Evangelicals and Catholics Together," it assumes that Christians are to be evangelizing one another, and everybody else. There are different readings of the connections between Christian anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, but it is doubtful that Christian Gentiles, who may rightly be overcome by "shame," should also be overcome by "silence." The Jewish-Christian dialogue of the last thirty years, in which some of us have been strongly engaged, must be counted as an enormous blessing that is unprecedented in the two thousand years of tortured history shared by Jews and Christians. But such dialogue is shallow and dishonest if it is premised upon a protocol of silence about the most important difference between us, namely, our answer

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to the question, Who is Jesus?

Most disappointing in the reactions of some Jews and Christians to the Southern Baptist action was the claim that it violated the American understanding of religious pluralism. This is to elevate civil religion above the divine covenant that, however ambiguously, binds Jews and Christians to one another. We need always to be reminded that genuine pluralism does not mean pretending that our deepest differences make no difference. Rather, pluralism is engaging our deepest differences within the bond of civility and, above all, love. The Archbishop is right to say that Christians must "respect the integrity of other faiths." It is precisely the integrity—that is to say, the truth—of Judaism that is foundational to Christianity. In Jesus the Jew, as Pius XI declared against the Nazis, "We are all Semites." The question is whether, as Christians believe, it is through Jesus the Christ that the promise is fulfilled that Israel is to become "a light to the nations." St. Paul reflects in Romans 9-11 that this argument may go on until the End Time. It must go on—with sensitivity, with intelligence, with respect, with love. No matter how great the sense of shame or how strong the temptation to silence, faithful children of the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jesus have not the right to terminate the argument prematurely. We cannot casually agree to disagree, for it is in the honest exploration of both our agreement and disagreement that we are most securely bound to one another.

FT

The Real Threat to Religious Freedom

What, do you suppose, was the evil that the Founders had in mind when they adopted the First Amendment's Religion Clause with its "free exercise" and "no establishment" provisions? How you answer that question, contends Douglas Laycock of the University of Texas Law School, will largely determine where you come out on a host of church-state questions. Historically and at present, there are basically two answers to the question. The first is that the evil the Founders had in mind is that human beings suffered for their religious beliefs and practices. The second answer is that the evil is that religions imposed suffering on human beings.

In a powerfully argued article in the *Minnesota Law Review*, Laycock endorses the first answer, and analyzes why so many contemporary jurists assume the rightness of the second answer. He traces thought about religious freedom from the wars of religion during the Reformation era up to the present. He allows that there is some truth in both of the above answers, but the basic reality is that the threat to religious freedom was and is posed by the state. "But there is far more truth in the first account; it was the state that had the power to persecute. Religious pronouncements had no effect without the temporal power of the state. Interdicts and excommunication had no effect on those who had already repudiated the interdicting or excommunicating authority. Even under the various Inquisitions, where the church may have been most culpable, power to inflict temporal punishment was reserved to the state. This reservation of state power was often a bare formality, but it left ultimate authority in the state, so that the Inquisition was effective where the secular ruler proved cooperative. The form and vigor of the Inquisitions varied sharply over time and place, often in response to local law and politics. Sometimes the state took the lead and the restraining influence came from the church. For example, it was Ferdinand and Isabella, and not a pope, bishop, or religious order, who invigorated the Spanish Inquisition and appointed Tomas de Torquemada, the most infamous of the Inquisitors General. The Spanish Inquisition was always subject to the Crown, and only secondarily to the Pope; the Kings of Spain always appointed the Inquisitors General and had effective power to secure their resignation."

The state, Laycock notes, often engaged in religious persecution for reasons that were secular rather than religious. He draws a parallel with the reasoning of jurists today who say that it is not a persecution of religion if the burden imposed upon religionists is incidental rather than intended, as when the governmental measure in question is the result of "neutral and generally applicable laws"—laws enacted for secular reasons but with the effect of suppressing a religious practice. "One of the most famous Reformation examples might itself be described as a neutral and generally applicable law if adjudicated today under the Free Exercise Clause. In Henry's England, it was treason to question the validity of his second marriage. This prohibition was based on the strongest reason of national security. If his second marriage were invalid, the children of that marriage would be illegitimate; the claim of illegitimacy would challenge their right to the throne and threaten civil war over the succession. This particular form of treason was committed by stating a core Catholic belief, but the law applied to everyone and was stated in religiously neutral terms."

Any straightforward reading of the Religion Clause leaves no doubt that it, like the entire Bill of Rights, is intended to protect the people from the government, not the other way around. And yet so

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many persist in the belief that the purpose of the Religion Clause is to protect the government from citizens who are religious. Why should this be? Laycock's answer is, in my view, convincing: "In part it is because those who hold that view have misread history. They have blamed too much on the church and too little on the state. In part it is because they have thought that their preferred secular ideologies were inherently different from religion, and that religion is uniquely susceptible to the temptation to intolerance and absolutism. I think that they are wrong on each of these points. The First Amendment constrains Congress, not churches, and this is no accident. The amendment was aimed squarely at the problem the Founders sought to solve. During the Reformation and today, it was and is governments that punish people for religious beliefs and practices. The most common motives have changed, the alignment of factions has changed, but the central evil has remained the same." The Constitution was written and ratified by people who believed that the concentration of powers is necessary to effective government, and, at the same time, were keenly aware that such a concentration threatened human liberty. Therefore those powers must be divided and constrained. Therefore the Bill of Rights, and therefore, most specifically, the Religion Clause.

FT

PROTESTANT REGRESS THE FORMULA FOR CATHOLIC PROGRESS

Writing in *Commonweal*, Peter Steinfels, senior religion reporter for the *New York Times*, describes what is now a very tired scenario: "A church that is democratic, egalitarian, open, embracing, tolerant, innovating, lay-led, diverse, and affirmative of American values is pitted against a church that is autocratic, hierarchical, dogmatic, discriminating, clerical, monolithic, and committed to a European past." This is in the course of reviewing a book from Sheed & Ward, *Laity, American and Catholic: Transforming the Church*, which interprets a 1993 national survey done for the *National Catholic Reporter* (*NCR* also owns Sheed & Ward).

The book's viewpoint, writes Steinfels, also "informs Call to Action, We Are Church, the Association for the Rights of Catholics, Catholics Speak Out, Corpus, and any number of other groups on the Church's left." It is also the outlook "that ripples through the American news media's approach to Catholicism." The authors of the book think things are going swimmingly for the "progressive" cause. Problems such as the pope's claim to doctrinal authority are "in tension with the American temper and the very thing the U.S. Constitution was written to restrict," but such problems, the book suggests, are passing remnants from the bad old days of Catholicism. Steinfels describes the book as "naive history in a triumphalist mode, without shadow or irony."

He is surprised that one of the authors is Dean R. Hoge, a Presbyterian sociologist at Catholic University, who has written insightfully—also in our pages—about the dramatic decline of oldline Protestantism. What Hoge sees as causes of Protestant decline he here seems to hail as signs of Catholic renewal. The study of mainline Protestants, and adult Presbyterians in particular, concludes that it is "likely that their children will be even less committed to Christianity or to the church than they themselves. . . . Few of their children will rebel, for there is little to rebel against; they are more likely to be marginally involved in church life or to drift away." Steinfels notes that the Protestants studied are in "a church that ordains married men and women; does not condemn contraception, abortion, or remarriage after divorce; is inclusive in its criteria for membership; prides itself on affirming American values; and emphasizes democratic decision making and the laity's right to participate in congregational spending, selecting pastors, and determining official church positions. In other words, a church that has long since institutionalized the kinds of concerns that *Laity, American and Catholic* highlights as crucial to American Catholicism's future."

Steinfels concludes his devastating critique on a note not untouched by defensiveness: "One of the drawbacks of the stark, good-guys-versus-bad-guys framework informing this book is that it encourages an atmosphere where merely to raise these qualms immediately qualifies one as a 'restorationist.' That is positively silly—and intellectually counterproductive. The historian who looks back may shake her head in wonder at how the ideological commitments that made these scholars highlight one set of very real issues became blinders that kept them—and many others in their camp—from examining so much else."

Ah, that very conservative fear of being called a conservative. A future historian may shake his (male or female) head in wonder at how a very thoughtful reporter feels it necessary to insist, in the midst of the shambles, that he is against restoration. It all depends on what is to be restored. Recall that the driving force of renewal at Vatican Council II was *ressourcement*, which is undoubtedly a kind of restoration. Despite the limping conclusion (he is writing for *Commonweal*, after all), Steinfels has

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nailed the mindlessness of a progressive insouciance that thinks it a good thing that, in the words of one author, younger Catholics "place a higher priority on being good Christians than they do on being good Catholics," when "good Christian" is indistinguishable from the cultural liberalism promoted by, for instance, the *National Catholic Reporter.*

FT

Beyond Suspicion

Many years ago, like about thirty, some of my "*Commonweal* Catholic" friends were much embarrassed by the popularity of Bishop Fulton J. Sheen. That many people took him to be the public face of Catholic intellectuality was deemed something of a scandal. I recall one academic deploring most particularly the bishop's television excursus on the errors of Sigmund Freud, which he concluded with the derisive declaration, "Freud is a fraud."

In those days, Freud was for almost all intellectuals and those who aspired to being intellectuals an untouchable icon of a world come of age. Today one might argue that Bishop Sheen was just a bit ahead of time. Until recently, the establishment of the allegedly avant-garde rested on the three pillars of Marx, Darwin, and Freud. Outside the cult-like corners of the prestige academy, Marx is in ruins, Freud is crumbling, and Darwin is beginning to totter. The entire modern sensibility that was built upon the "hermeneutics of suspicion" (Paul Ricoeur) is now collapsing in the face of a relentless suspicion of suspicion as the key to whatever truth is available to us mortals.

Many thinkers have contributed to the demolition of Freud and Freudianism in the past decade. Paul Vitz, a psychologist at New York University, has not received the credit he deserves for a number of studies demonstrating Freud's dependence upon, and perversion of, Christian narratives in constructing his ersatz religion. Deservedly celebrated is Frederick Crews of the University of California who, in the *New York Review of Books* and in his book *Skeptical Engagements,* has been smiting Freudians hip and thigh, no doubt putting many psychoanalysts back on the couch to dream of the days when their declining business was viewed as a science. But now comes what may be the definitive tour de force by John Farrell of Claremont McKenna College. *Freud's Paranoid Quest* (New York University Press, 275 pp., $34.95) is, quite simply, one of the most intellectually scintillating, persuasive, and elegantly argued books that I have read in a long time.

The book is about much more than Freud. Farrell begins with Francis Bacon and Descartes and works his way up (or down) through all the mental benchmarks of modernity, from Hume and Rousseau through Nietzsche, exposing the essentially paranoid structure of the methodology of suspicion. For many moderns, Kant was a place of refuge, but Freud, the "master of suspicion," invaded that sanctuary as well. Farrell writes, "The aim of Kant's transcendental turn was to sacrifice immediacy of knowledge of the external world for certainty within the domain of the subject. Within this transcendental domain, the subject gives its own law to nature and to its own will. It was an inward migration intended to establish an unshakable autonomy. Freud upsets this intention by introducing within the enclosed kingdom of the Kantian subject the same division and distance that separate it from the outside world. Opening this new and ungovernable territory, the unconscious, Freud established an internal Other which, as he stated, showed reason that it was not the master of its own house."

Bacon created the role of the scientist as hero, the bold adventurer who, abandoning the comforts of tradition, mythology, and, above all, religion, dared to face the naked truth. It is in that tradition of scientific heroism that Farrell locates Freud. "With the revelation of the Oedipal code, Freud becomes the final hero, the hero who could unmask himself, asserting a paranoid version of psychology in order to display his own 'narcissistic' character and to enjoy the triumph of that attractively disturbing irony. The effect was not solely one of destruction: Freud's aim was to complete the transition to modernity by reintegrating the broken fragments of tradition in a comprehensive psychological myth, with himself at the center. Freud thus gave a most convincing performance in a role which, since Rousseau, has dominated the scene of modernity: the role of the first honest man. The division between heroic analyst and pathetic analysand is fully prefigured in Rousseau: pathetic in the doing and heroic in the telling seems to be the motto of the paranoid intellectual. Freud even claimed to believe that the discovery of psychoanalysis had deprived him of his ability to lie."

In Goethe's *Faust,* the epitome of the modern hero declares, "In the Beginning was the Deed." In Freud's mythology, the deed was the primal crime in which the sons of the primal father liberated themselves from the idealism of narcissistic enthrallment in order to attain the reality of action. All must be destroyed and cursed in order to be free from destruction and the curse that rests upon lesser mortals. In Act One of *Faust,* just before entering his pact with Mephistopheles, Faust declares:

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My curse I hurl on all that spangles
The mind with dazzling make-belief,
With lies and blandishments entangles
The soul within this cave of grief!
Accursed, to start, the smug delusion
Whereby the mind itself ensnares!
Cursed, brash phenomenal intrusion
That blinds the senses unawares!
Cursed, what in lying dreams assures us
Of name and glory past the grave!
Cursed, pride of ownership that lures us
Through wife and children, plow and slave!
Accursed by Mammon, when his treasure
To deeds of daring eggs us on,
For idle self-indulgent leisure
Spreads a luxurious divan!
Cursed by the balsam of the grape!
Cursed, highest prize of lovers' thrall!
A curse on faith! A curse on hope!
A curse on patience, above all!

Farrell comments: "In this famous passage, Faust again reenacts the Enlightenment's annihilation of traditional, religious, and metaphysical culture and at the same time curses the results: the mind recognizes itself as a slave of 'make-belief,' of 'smug' self-delusion; it recognizes the phenomena of the natural world as no more than a source of distraction and confusion; and, given these recognitions, heroism, family life, love, even greed and intoxication lose their allure, nor can the Christian virtues offer consolation. Such is the disenchantment of the modern world. Faust's curse does not arise out of mere psychological distress. It expresses the causes of that distress, and, indeed, it seeks to master them by embracing the impoverishment of the world with a destructive movement of the will. Its desperate hope is to set itself above destruction by a more total destruction. As Faust so Freud."

But I must stop. The problem with a book like this is that you want to quote the whole thing. Farrell's argument is the more effective because he regularly pauses to state, with generosity and fairness, the objections that might be raised to his thesis, and then proceeds to answer such objections in a way that is almost always convincing. *Freud's Paranoid Quest* is a remarkable achievement. The question raised is whether the entirety of the "modernity project" did not get off on the wrong foot by assuming that suspicion is the key to knowledge. The modern premise was that nothing can be accepted as true if it can reasonably be doubted. And of course everything, including the reason that doubts, can reasonably be doubted, if one is determined to doubt.

As Farrell trenchantly argues, all such reductive logic turns upon itself. The relentlessly suspicious cannot sustain their trust in suspicion. Paranoia is, among other things, a stratagem for avoiding that self-destruction by designing oneself as the grandiose hero who, against a hostile world, possesses the explanation of explanations that survives every doubt and denial. The great modern exemplar of this all-encompassing ploy is Cervante's *Quixote*, whom Farrell employs to brilliant effect. This paraphrase and a few quotes do not do justice to the intricacy and elegance of the argument. The only thing for it is to read the book, which, as you might have surmised by now, I warmly recommend.

FT

WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ "We Are Church" is the conglomeration of leftist Catholic groups set on getting a million signatures to protest the oppression of a sexist, racist, phallocentric, eurocentric, authoritarian, etc. etc. church. Sister Maureen Fiedler is the national coordinator of the effort. (I take perverse pleasure in one reporter's comment on an encounter I had with Sr. Maureen on a network television program: "Neuhaus Romed while Fiedler burned.") She has sent a letter to Catholic schools suggesting that teachers enlist their students to get signatures for the protest, asking each signer to contribute one dollar. "Local groups that do the work receive 60 percent of the funds they collect!" For the mathematically challenged, she adds: "Collecting 1,000 signatures and $1,000, for example, means that your student group will earn $600 for local programs!" Apart from the unseemliness of exploiting children for her partisan games, this ploy does little to enhance the credibility of a signature campaign that is supposed to demonstrate massive discontent with church leadership. "So the kids in your school are really mad at the Church?" "Shucks no, we just needed new basketball jerseys."

■ To those of us not reared on computers, "http://www.firstthings.com" mostly looks like what happens to our copy after the printers take a long lunch at the local rathskeller. But the junior editors here at the journal—who were fed bits and bytes with their baby food—insist that I mention it, as it is apparently the Internet address for our new FIRST THINGS web site. Put together by Christian Leadership Ministries, the site has a very attractive design and seems quite simple to use. It already contains the complete text of the last four years of the journal, and we're working on setting up the first two or three years. (Back in those days, before the flood, we used "dedicated typesetting machines," which seems to make difficult translation into formats Internet users can access.) The site offers an

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easy search engine, an issue-by-issue browser, and lots of opportunities to subscribe to the journal. You can even submit letters to the editor by following the on-screen menus. First Things is not about to become some sort of on-line hypertext. Our primary aim remains putting out as fine a magazine as we can manage, and the web site will run a month behind: an issue's text not appearing on-line until that issue has been replaced on the newstands by the next issue. But easy electronic access to the many fine articles we've published over the years is a service we're glad to provide for our readers.

■ This might have been an interesting idea. Taking note of the end of the century, the *New York Times Magazine* asked a passel of notables to speculate on what the world will be like a hundred years from now. Richard Rorty, the country's number one celebrity philosopher, is apparently the only one who thinks religion might still be around. In his scenario, the country fell under a military dictatorship early in the twenty-first century and the Dark Years continued until 2044 when the Democratic Vistas Party, a "coalition of trade unions and churches," toppled the regime and ushered in an era of egalitarian fraternity (or, as some insisted, "siblinghood"). Writing in the year 2096, Rorty says: "In the churches, the 'social gospel' theology of the early twentieth century has been rediscovered. Walter Rauschenbusch's 'Prayer against the servants of Mammon' ('Behold the servants of Mammon, who defy thee and drain their fellow-men of gain . . . who have made us ashamed of our dear country by their defilements and have turned our holy freedom into a hollow name . . .') is familiar to most churchgoers." While socialism as the state ownership of the means of production was discredited in the twentieth century, the egalitarianism of Rorty's utopia is maintained by fellow-feeling and a pervasive altruism. While America is much reduced in power and prosperity, "our chastened mood, our lately learned humility, may have made us better able to realize that everything depends on keeping our fragile sense of American fraternity intact." There is something touchingly conservative about Rorty's vision. Walter Rauschenbusch was the father of Rorty's mother. Grandpa saw the future and it works! Rorty is a famous josher and I expect he is having us on. Or maybe not.

■ The toy doberman snaps again. Frank Rich of the *Times* witnessed the thirty-five thousand Promise Keepers gathered at Shea Stadium and did his homework by reading the *Nation*, which featured PK as its hysteria of the week. "Particularly ominous," says Mr. Rich in tones most ominous, "are the many ideological and financial links between the PK hierarchy and organizations that are pushing the full religious-right agenda of outlawing abortion, demonizing homosexuals, and bringing prayer and the teaching of creationism to public schools." In short, PK is conservative! He notes that PK is supported by "James Dobson's Focus on the Family, the powerful, radio-driven theocratic crusade that is to the right of the Christian Coalition and has twice its membership." The article in the *Nation* that Mr. Rich has been inhaling in the course of his investigative journalism notes that PK has thousands of "cells" in local communities, just like you-know-who used to have cells. The article concludes: "Now, mobilizing hundreds of thousands of men into a disciplined, hierarchical, nationwide, grassroots formation with significant military connections but a subtle presentation, Promise Keepers poses a new challenge. Its promise may be our peril." "An army PK most certainly is," writes Mr. Rich. "Its preachers sound more like generals and hard-charging motivational cheerleaders than clergy." The toy doberman is all aquiver with the frisson of another anticipated assault. The fascists are coming! The fascists are coming!

■ I won't go into detail, but if I don't mention it I'm sure to be asked why not. For the detail, see Michael Fumento's "Politics and Church Burnings" in the October *Commentary* or, if you really want the full story, write the Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD) at 1521 16th Street NW, Washington D.C. 20036. The long and short of it is that the big to-do last spring about the rash of black church burnings turns out to have been pretty much of a hoax. "Terror in the Night Down South," screamed *Newsweek*, along with countless other media. Now the sources mentioned above—plus the *Wall Street Journal*, Associated Press, *USA Today*, and others—have looked into the facts and found that the crisis was made up by folks who parlayed white guilt about racism into a very profitable thing. In the lead, once again, was the National Council of Churches (NCC), which established a Burned Churches Fund that has reportedly taken in more than ten million dollars and is still counting. Readers may remember an item in these pages some while back that described the sorry plight of the racial justice office of the NCC, which lost its director because there was no money for basics such as travel expenses. The office was, for all practical purposes, closed down. Happy days are here again, thanks to the Burned Churches Fund, and the NCC can't hire staff fast enough. Since the money isn't needed for rebuilding churches, and since money is so wondrously fungible, the NCC has embarked on an ambitious program to educate Americans about their racism. Other groups, including the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Christian Coalition, and the American Jewish Committee, did not distinguish themselves by rushing to join the NCC-led panic. Moreover, the Institute on Religion and Democracy is worried about some of the people who headed the NCC effort and are now in charge of the loot. Don

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Rojas, for instance, is the administrator of the Burned Churches Fund. Mr. Rojas has over the years worked as a propaganda officer for Marxist-Leninist dictatorships in Grenada, Czechoslovakia, and Cuba, and is a great supporter of Minister Louis Farrakhan and the notorious anti-Semite Leonard Jeffries of City College in New York. (IRD, as you might expect from its name, is awfully stubborn in its belief that churches should not promote the enemies of religion and democracy.) Hundreds of churches, black and white, burn or are burned every year. It's a very bad thing. The good news is that many thousands of Americans responded generously to the appeal for funds, as usual. The bad news is that some religious leaders are not above setting off false alarms and exploiting fear and guilt in order to raise big money. Also as usual. The devilishly delicious twist in this case is that the money raised by exploiting white guilt feelings will be used to generate more white guilt feelings. When you're on to a good thing, why stop?

■ Thirty years ago, the late and indisputably great Paul Ramsey wrote a little book titled *Who Speaks for the Church*? It was a critique of the presumption of the World Council of Churches that it represents the Christian voice in the public square. Under the title was the author's name, "Paul Ramsey." Paul enjoyed pointing out that one had only to read the cover to get the answer to the question posed by the title. Now Delacorte Press, in advertising Jim Wallis' *The Soul of Politics*, has gone Ramsey one better. At the top of the ad: "Who Speaks for God?" Directly underneath: "Jim Wallis." Now that's reaching. Wallis is the editor of *Sojourners* magazine, a leftist publication that has recently joined the "Beyondist" movement so brilliantly launched by Dick Morris and exemplified by Bill Clinton ("beyond left and right, beyond liberal and conservative," etc.). The ad describes Wallis as "probably the most prominent, controversial evangelical pastor today." Considering that he speaks for God, it is no more than his due.

■ It is, all in all, a remarkable achievement. The six-part PBS series, *With God On Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right*, is an unusually fair and informative account of the history of conservative religious activism from the emergence of the "neo-evangelical" movement following World War II to today's insurgency led by groups such as the Christian Coalition and the Family Research Council. Viewers of a certain age will enjoy meeting again such anti-Communist crusaders as Fred Schwartz and Billy James Hargis, once such prominent figures on the far right. Produced by Calvin Skaggs, the series has a perhaps unprecedented ideological range of philanthropic sponsorship, from the Bradley Foundation on the right to the John D. MacArthur Foundation on the left. One might infer from this that the country is not so polarized as some think, but the opposite conclusion is probably closer to the mark: Both right and left assume that a fair presentation of the facts will obviously serve their ends. The series can be faulted on several scores. The fundamentalist-evangelical story line is not so self-contained as the series suggests. More attention should have been paid the crosscutting influences of what was happening in other parts of the religious world, notably oldline Protestantism and Catholicism. Largely absent also are the several transmogrifications of what is meant by "conservatism"—from Taft Republicanism to the several worlds of neoconservatism and the part played by conflicting attitudes toward Israel. And it is not at all clear why Michael Horton, noted foe of "Evangelicals and Catholics Together," is pertinent to the story. But let me not quibble. Only so much can be covered even in six hours. *With God On Our Side* is probably the best thing television has ever done on the conservative Christian insurgency in the political arena. The series leaves it to the viewer to decide whether "the religious right" is a frightening invasion of the aliens or an instance of citizens seeking redress of just grievances and, along the way, rejuvenating the American democratic experiment.

■ Predictably, not everyone was so taken with the series. Writing in the *Nation*, Alyssa Katz says, "The historical perspective the series offers is invaluable, but its parade of evidence amounts to media junk food, best consumed for the guilty pleasure of staring a fearsome beast in the eye from the safety of invisibility." At the same time, she learned that "evangelical Christians consider themselves a minority oppressed in a nation that was founded to provide religious freedom." She adds, "It's a view well worth listening to. . . . When secular America openly broke away from traditional Christian values in the sixties and seventies, political involvement by conservative Christians became, in retrospect, inevitable." That's the *Nation*, mind you.

■ If you like what you're reading, do not selfishly keep it to yourself. Please send us a list of family members, friends, and associates who should be reading FT, and we'll send them a sample issue. Giving you full credit, of course. Why not do it soon? Like right now.

■ Attention is turned to Christmas, and to Christmas shopping. Brace yourself for the usual rush of articles and editorials deploring the "commercialization" of Christmas. Of course anything can get out of hand, but, all in all, I think the commercialization of Christmas an excellent thing. People are giving gifts, permitting themselves to be generous, even a bit extravagant. It is hard to think the world would be a nicer place in the absence of this flurry of friendliness. Despite the catechetical

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deficit in contemporary Christianity, I expect most people are more or less aware that it all has to do with God's extravagant gift of the Redeemer. Except for the people who put out the major mail order catalogues. I shop regularly from the catalogues sent by the Metropolitan Museum, the Smithsonian, and the major museums in places such as Boston and Chicago. In recent years I've been struck that they are almost all devoid of art or other gifts that are explicitly Christian. There is a lot of Jewish, and quite a bit of Egyptian, Chinese, and Inca stuff, but very little that is Christian. Yet these catalogues are clearly designed for Christmas giving in a country that is over 94 percent Christian. I am sorry, but it has to be a very deliberate decision on the part of those who manage the museum art business. I know it is not because there is not a great demand for Christian art. The Metropolitan Museum gift shop has over the years had some fine medieval Christian reproductions. They do not appear in its catalogue, and on at least two occasions when I have asked at the shop the answer was that such items were so popular they could not keep up with the demand. But of course all they have to do is order more. Most remarkable is the catalogue of the Collections of the Vatican Museum, sent out from Roanoke, Virginia. If there is anywhere in the world where one might expect to find fine reproductions of Christian art, it is the Vatican Museum. In fact, this elegant catalogue offers, among many other items, Etruscan jars, tapestry fireplace screens, Roman coins, crystal vases designed by Raphael, and a head of Apollo, but Christian art is conspicuously absent. Call it a conspiracy or call it a coincidence, but the clear result is to keep Christ out of Christmas. It appears these big museums, too, have a perverse inhibition about commercializing Christmas, so their catalogues pretend it is simply a "holiday season" that, for some reason or another, happens to come toward the end of December each year. It is dumb business and leaves one wishing that people would get serious about commercializing Christmas.

■ It really is an encouragement. Wherever I go, as well as in letters, people tell me how much FT means to them, how they use articles in discussion groups, send them to friends, and goodness knows what else. (Again, feel free to copy away, as long as no money changes hands.) I am also impressed by the number of people who say they save back issues for reference. In that connection, you might want to look at the ad for the neat little back-issue organizer (see page 44). Each one holds a year or more of issues and, let's face it, that stack of FT on the coffee table is getting to be a bit much, or so a reader in Cleveland has been complaining to his wife for at least a couple of years.

■ The politicizing of everything is the bane of this unhappy age. David Norbrook of Magdalen College, Oxford, reviews a new slew of books that aim at "contextualizing" and "historicizing" Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Writing in the *Times Literary Supplement*, Norbrook is not unsympathetic to the argument that Milton's work was importantly influenced by his republican propensities and his hostility to the restored monarchy. But there is ever so much more to it than that, says Norbrook: "And there are possible dangers in restricting *Paradise Lost* too exclusively to Restoration contexts. For Milton, it would have dignified the banality of the restored monarchy far too much to equate it with the fall of man; rather, recalling the genuine tragedy of the Fall would prevent a shrunken pessimism from reading a particular disaster as the end of all responsibility. That universalism certainly contrasts with the celebration of difference in recent cultural politics. For Milton and other republicans, it was courtly society that nurtured a destructive, competitive individuality, with the 'naked majesty' of a common humanity becoming alienatingly 'besmeared with gold.' *Paradise Lost* worries at the origins of humanity as a species. Its sublimity centers on its ability to wrench us out of a human perspective so that we can view ourselves from the outside, and ask with the stupefied serpent: what on earth has God wrought?"

■ The curmudgeonly but kind Dr. Theodore Dalrymple relates his encounters with the dregs of society in his column, "If symptoms persist . . . ," in the London *Spectator*. "I see quite a number of patients whose character undergoes a regular change, mainly for the better, as they enter my room and for the worse when they return to the bosom of their family. There are not a few of them who suffer an irresistible urge to strangle their wives, especially when no one who could stop them is looking: though, as their wives invariably point out, 'they don't do it all the time, doctor.' Continuous strangulation is rather difficult to conceptualize." Dalrymple is bothered by the growing number of people who say they can't help doing what they do, and deplores the fact that this is now "official medical doctrine." He cites an article on "myths about the treatment of addiction" in *Lancet*, the British medical journal, written by two researchers at the University of Pennsylvania. "One reason why many physicians are unsympathetic towards the addict is that addiction is perceived as being self-afflicted," they write. "However, there are numerous involuntary components in the addictive process. Whether the drug is taken can be influenced by external factors such as peer pressure, price, and, in particular, availability." But of course, now that they mention it, almost nobody takes drugs that are not available. Dalrymple comments: "Mind you, I don't blame the authors for this: after all, the pressure upon academics to publish in reputable journals nowadays is as irresistible as the urge of husbands to strangle their wives."

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■ The opinion of the moment, or maybe of the last ten years, is that H. Richard Niebuhr was a deeper thinker than his more famous brother Reinhold. It's a subject that comes up from time to time in the talk of intellectuals of a certain training (and certain age), and I go back and forth on it. Certainly Reinhold had a greater influence on my early formation, but I confess that I reflect more often on arguments made by H. Richard, and his lapidary summaries of whole schools of moral and theological thought stick stubbornly in the mind. Maybe he was lapidary to a fault, refining things so elegantly that the rough edges of truth got lost. More often his elegance served incisiveness. For instance, the well-known description of the religious liberalism that gained ascendancy in the late nineteenth century and ruled so long. It was, he said, centered in a belief that "a God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross." For several years I used his *Christ and Culture* as the text in a moral theology course at St. Joseph's Seminary here in New York. It provides a wonderfully neat typology of different approaches to the church-and-society question, much like the "models" approach developed by Father Avery Dulles on other questions. But I finally realized I was spending so much class time arguing with the typology that I was neglecting the subject at hand, so this year I dropped *Christ and Culture,* reluctantly. So what, the impatient reader asks, got Neuhaus off on H. Richard Niebuhr? The answer is the welcome appearance of *H. Richard Niebuhr: Theology, History, and Culture* , edited by William Stacy Johnson and published by Yale University Press. The book is 230 pages of previously unpublished essays, lectures, and sermons, an unexpected feast for those who have a cultivated taste for Niebuhr. Included is a little reflection he wrote shortly before his death in 1962. Maybe you, too, will find it a graceful provocation: "Sometimes everyone who has taught through spoken and written words needs to look back on his activity with the question, What has been the intention of my work? Not, What did I intend? I always intended something very specific—to gain clarity or give some clarity about this point or that—to satisfy my curiosity about some puzzle—to understand some relationship. I have had and have intentions but what does all the work taken together intend? This is Kierkegaard's question in *Point of View for my Work as an Author*. . . . What was the intention behind all my intentions, the fundamental intention which I represented rather than willed, the thing to which I was committed rather than committed myself? In unbelief I call that intention fate—what was I fated to do—in confidence I call it divine governance."

■ Among endangered species in need of protection is the village atheist. *Society* magazine serves the intellectual ecology by publishing Allan Mazur, a specialist in "biosociology" at Syracuse University. His article, "Science Three, Religion Zero," asserts with a confidence wondrously uninhibited by learning that religion has been done in by the Copernican revolution, evolutionary theory, and historical-critical consciousness. The end of religion, says Mr. Mazur, is also evident in the fact that clergy engage in an "ecumenicalism" that acknowledges "that their neighbors' religions have their own validity." Religion may have some vestigial influence in pressing "smallish disputes" in the public arena, but it is irrelevant to the big questions. "Religious groups sometimes win when they engage in everyday politics, but science persistently wins the major wars." I guess we might as well pack it in.

■ I reviewed Paul Johnson's latest offering, *The Quest for God: A Personal Pilgrimage* (HarperCollins), for a daily and was generally favorable to his idiosyncratic but intriguing account of his Christian, and very Catholic, faith. Other reviews have run the gamut from raves (Norman Podhoretz in *Commentary*) to scathing ridicule (I-forget-who in the *Spectator*). One of the more curious is Ian Buruma's treatment in the *New Yorker*, which is basically an exposé of Johnson's political and ideological gyrations over the decades. Buruma concludes with this: "But what I find particularly irritating is that these yearnings for discipline are presented as calls for freedom and democracy. In the conclusion to his book Johnson tells us what the love and worship of God is all about: 'to turn our minds, and if possible our bodies too, away from earthliness to perfection, from doubt to certitude, from the self to goodness, and from the flesh to the spirit.' Perhaps this is true of the worship of God. But if it is democracy and freedom we want we would do better to turn those propositions precisely the other way around." Now if I got this right, Mr. Buruma believes that democracy and freedom are advanced by turning our minds, and if possible our bodies too, away from perfection to earthliness, from certitude to doubt, from goodness to the self, and from the spirit to the flesh. There are no doubt many people who believe that, which helps account for the currently unhappy state of democracy and freedom.

■ St. Ann's was a nice little parish church, says Helen Hull Hitchcock, and then it had the misfortunate of being renovated. For Catholic churches, being renovated usually means running into the demolition program set forth in *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship,* a 1978 tract of doubtful authority that is treated by some liturgical experts as magisterial teaching far outranking papal encyclicals. Statues, stained glass, kneelers, and tabernacles—all must go in order to

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"facilitate interactive worship." This presupposes the interaction is between us very splendid people rather than between God and human beings in all their neediness. Father Avery Dulles once mentioned that he spoke in one of these renovated spaces and noted a big banner on the front wall, "God Is Other People." He said he very much wished that he had a magic marker with which to put a strong comma after "Other." As for St. Ann, Mrs. Hitchcock says it "has been expensively gutted, stripped, and transformed from a place of distinctively Catholic worship to a 'communal gathering space'—a multifunctional meeting room." She continues: "The justification for the literal iconoclasm in Catholic churches could hardly have been more clearly expressed by Cromwell's Roundheads after they had systematically beheaded every image in the Lady Chapel of Ely Cathedral or smashed all the stained glass windows at Canterbury, although Cromwell's soldiers were undoubtedly responsible for destroying far fewer sacred images than the liturgical 'experts' who imposed their views of renewal on the Catholic churches across America." Now it must be admitted that Catholic, and not only Catholic, churches frequently had an awful lot of schlock. "Environment and art in worship" is a very important subject. Critics of the liturgical and aesthetic experts sometimes confuse sacred space with cluttered space, and popular piety with vulgarity expressed in artistic trash. At the same time, Mrs. Hitchcock is right about the stripping of the altars that aims not at a cleaner or purer form but at a radically different understanding of worship itself. Among clergy the question is asked, What's the difference between a liturgist and a terrorist? Answer: You can negotiate with a terrorist. Having given up on negotiating, many are now in revolt against the alleged experts. One voice of intelligent revolt is *Adoremus Bulletin*, published by a new liturgical society that can be reached at P.O. Box 5858, Arlington, VA 22205 (703-241-5858).

■ Some consider him one of the most learned men and probably the greatest theologian of the century, and I am not disposed to argue the point. Shortly before his death, Hans Urs von Balthasar was made a cardinal by John Paul II. "One evening during Balthasar's final days on earth, he remarked to a few friends who, having overcome his natural shyness, were holding a party in his honor, 'If you, my friends, are happy, then I must be happy too.' He said this without design and without affectation. I was struck by the extraordinary simplicity of faith in a man endowed with such a vast and astute intelligence and a heart capable of receiving and mitigating the most searing anguish." That is from *Hans Urs von Balthasar: A Theological Style* (Eerdmans), written by his friend Angelo Scola. I do not have a terribly long list of people from this century whom I eagerly look forward to meeting in the inn at the end of life's road, there to engage in theological conversation over a leisurely dinner and good cigar, but Balthasar is near the top of it. I expect, though, that he and Karl Barth are already hard at it, and won't mind if I just listen in.

■ From *Ecumenical News International*: "For the first time in history, Swiss churches, including the Roman Catholic Church and Switzerland's main Protestant churches, have joined forces with environmental groups to launch a petition calling on the Swiss government to take urgent action to combat global warming." Of notable firsts there is no end.

■ He has a dream. Reinhard Frieling is director of the Institute for Inter-Confessional Research and billed as one of Germany's leading Protestant ecumenists. The following is also from *Ecumenical News International*, reporting on a talk by Frieling at Paderborn University: "'Peter was no pope, and the Pope is not the only Peter,' Frieling said, referring to the claim of the Roman Catholic Church that the popes are the successors of St. Peter, one of the disciples of Jesus." (Ah, *that* St. Peter.) Of the pope, Frieling said, "My dream is of a servant of unity who, perhaps as president of a council, recognizes a reconciled diversity of the churches, who promotes dialogue and reconciliation rather than giving audiences and reaching final decisions. I dream of a pope who allows open communion and tells Catholics that they have fulfilled their Sunday duty by taking part in a Protestant or ecumenical service." In his dream, Catholics are allowed to be Protestants, but apparently they would still have a Sunday duty. There are no doubt those who think that might be an improvement on the current state of Catholic discipline.

■ "Out of the Whirlwind: Claiming a Vision of Progressive Christianity." We had mentioned earlier this national conference at Trinity Cathedral (Episcopal) in Columbia, South Carolina. According to news reports, "nearly one hundred" people showed up. Progressive is today's word for liberal, and it appears that participants huffed and puffed mightily to put some life into the poor thing. James Adams, for thirty years rector of St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C., presided, as inegalitarian as that sounds. "Here we are, a group of ninety people, gathered to talk about transforming an institution, the Church, that has a 1,900-year history of oppression and exclusion," announced Adams. It sounds like the kind of thing that should be killed, not transformed. But, considering the transformation the group had in mind, that may be a distinction without a difference. In the opening sermon, the retired Episcopal bishop of Atlanta, Bennett Sims, preached on Mark's account of Jesus healing a blind man. "We know that

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it was not the faith of the Nicene Creed that made him well. That fourth-century formulation actually may make some people ill," Sims said to laughter. "This is not to despise the Nicene Creed," he added. Of course not. "Though there are better ways to frame it without sacrificing orthodoxy," the bishop added. And this is just the group to do it. Dr. Frederica Harris Thompsett, academic dean of Episcopal Divinity School, asked, "How do you speak out in a post-Nicean way in a Nicean church? It probably means asking questions. The biblical prophets did." The prophets were famous for asking questions. That's no doubt why the symbol for Jeremiah is a question mark. Andrew Getman of Washington, D.C. urged participants not to be nasty to conservatives. "Unless we can hear a conservative brother as someone who needs an arm around his shoulder and to be listened to, then that hurt can turn to violence." Which, being translated, means, Don't provoke the animals. Not everybody was happy with the meeting. Gene Robinson, assistant to the New Hampshire bishop, said, "I'm not so sure that the $500 or so we each spent getting here might not have been better sent to the Lambda Legal Defense Fund, which is fighting for us on gay and lesbian marriages." On the final afternoon, after extended small-group discussions, chair Adams offered a rousing call to arms: "I don't even want to identify what we have in common, because that would be divisive." One is reminded, for some reason, of the old question: What do you get when you cross a Jehovah's Witness and a Unitarian? Answer: Someone who goes around knocking on doors with nothing particular in mind. "Out of the Whirlwind: The Still, Small Sound of Expiring Air." But a measure of sympathy is in order. The basic mistake of the convenors was to think that people would pay their way to a conference promoting "progressive Christianity" when expenses are covered for attending denominational meetings that do much the same thing.

■ Evelyn Smith was minding her own business. It is a very small business, that of renting her two duplex apartments. A devout Presbyterian, she refused to lease to unmarried couples. The ever vigilant state charged her with illegal discrimination and took her to court, where the California Supreme Court ruled against her appeal to the free exercise of her religion. To rub in the point, Ms. Smith was fined $454 and ordered to inform prospective tenants about (a) her run-in with the state housing commission, (b) how her claim of religious freedom was rejected, and (c) how she now pays homage to the government's policy of "equal housing opportunity." Writes Timothy Lynch in the Washington-based *Legal Times*, "One can almost see the smug bureaucratic smiles as the court upheld this bizarre form of secular contrition. . . . Leaving aside the court's narrow conception of religious liberty (and property rights), whatever happened to the idea of free speech? It is one thing to order a person to open her doors to unmarried couples, but forcing Smith to give a mini-speech about her so-called rehabilitation smacks of thought control." But how else to ensure that she does not incite others to the insurrectionary thought that marriage is to be preferred over living in sin? You can just imagine the kind of society we'd be living in were such ideas not forcefully controlled.

■ Of honorary doctorates I have a bunch, including some from Catholic universities, bestowed before I became controversial by becoming a Catholic. Now there appears the British edition of *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*, edited by "Charles Colson and Richard Neuhaus, S.J." It is an honor, I think, but I expect it is not authorized by the Society of Jesus. This plain diocesan priest did enjoy the foreword to the new edition by Member of Parliament David Alton in which he underscores the importance of ECT for sectarian strife in Northern Ireland and for evangelization in England, where less than 10 percent of the population attends church. So that more than makes up for the imputed "S.J."

■ *God, A Biography* got rave reviews from people who agree with author Jack Miles' depiction of a biblical God whom nobody could possibly trust or love. With such a God, it is little wonder that the churches have to gussy up Bible stories for popular consumption. Mr. Miles reportedly approves of Episcopal Church guidelines for teaching the flood in Sunday School. Harold O. J. Brown is of a different view: "Because children love pets, it could be extremely disagreeable to them to hear that God destroyed all of the animals (not to mention the people, of course). For this reason, this destructive, vengeful aspect is to be played down, and the totally unrelated Twenty-third Psalm, with God as the Good Shepherd, is to be introduced as a kind of counterpoint. The rainbow after the Flood, rather than the destructive Deluge itself, is to be emphasized, and each child given a card with a little rainbow on it. The message, of course, is that God is Very Nice and would not do anything mean or nasty. This is all quite sweet, of course, but it does totally obfuscate one essential part of the Deluge account, namely, that God is not willing to tolerate human depravity indefinitely and that human evil will bring destruction upon nature and upon innocent bystanders as well as on the evildoers themselves—a message that might seem particularly appropriate in an age of terrorism and environmental pollution."

■ I love Canada. My dog loves Canada. We spend part of every summer there, and it's beautiful. I was born there. My ninety-four-year-old mother lives there. In addition, FT has many Canadian subscribers and we treasure all of them. That having

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been said, there is this incessant discussion of "Canadian identity" that can be both amusing and tiresome. In the amusing category are two recent items. In a poll conducted by sociologist Reginald Bibby, 76 percent of those asked to name Canada's greatest living person either responded "no one comes to mind" or declined to answer. *Maclean's*, a national magazine published in Toronto, has concluded that Canada's most famous person is Pamela Anderson, who plays in the U.S. television program *Baywatch*. Believe me, Canada deserves better than that.

■ Doctor-assisted suicide and other forms of euthanasia are seductively appealing to many Americans. The Christian Medical and Dental Society has put together a resource kit that includes a video, leader's manual, popular handouts, bulletin inserts, and a slew of other materials to alert people to the temptation and how to resist it. We haven't reviewed all these items, but judging from the description, the kit (which retails for $30) might be of interest to readers. Write Dr. David Stevens, director of the society, at 501 Fifth Street, P.O. Box 5, Bristol, TN 37621.

■ Brace yourself for some good news. It was a close vote but the European Parliament has ruled that member states cannot provide funds to organizations or developing countries that use abortion or forced sterilization in birth control programs. This is a major vindication of the Holy See's position at the 1994 UN population conference in Cairo. Moreover, a proposed convention to be voted on by the Parliament would ban the production of human embryos for research purposes. (It also rejects the ideological, rather than medical, category of "pre-embryo.") Yet more: Italy's national bioethics committee issued a document stating that the human embryo is indeed a human being. "The embryo is one of us," said the committee's president. This is thought to be an important step in preparing the way for new legislation protecting the unborn. (The foregoing report is in response to the reader who complained this section has become a virtual Book of Lamentations.)

■ It's a crazy society that promotes same-sex marriage while at the same time prohibiting same-sex education, at least when the sex is male. As the alert reader knows, it is not society that is doing these things but the courts, which have declared obsolete the old-fashioned notion of government by the consent of the governed. All the more reason to welcome the straightforward statement of the Catholic bishops conference: "The Roman Catholic Church believes that marriage is a faithful, exclusive, and lifelong union between one man and one woman, joined as husband and wife in an intimate partnership of life and love." The institution of marriage, the bishops say, "must be preserved, protected, and promoted in both private and public realms. . . . Thus, we oppose attempts to grant the legal status of marriage to a relationship between persons of the same sex." The statement is superb both in its clear articulation of Christian teaching and its argument for the common good. A conservative pundit criticizes the statement because it also affirms that "the Catholic Church teaches emphatically that individuals and society must respect the basic human dignity of all persons, including those with a homosexual orientation." Such criticism is monumentally dumb. It is only in light of the God-given human dignity of all that we can understand the great sadness and tragedy of the gay lifestyle and the homosexualist agenda, including same-sex marriage.

■ In an understated but powerful review of *The Godless Constitution* by Isaac Kramnick and R. Laurence Moore (a book to which we have referred previously), Scott Idleman of Marquette University Law School counters their argument that groups such as the Christian Coalition are beyond the pale of this constitutional order. Writing in the *Notre Dame Law Review*, Idleman allows that one might claim that "the religious right" is a threat to the political order, "But it is not a claim that derives from the Constitution, and the authors err when they attempt to augment it with the 'spirit' of our political covenant. It is not difficult to think of particular groups or viewpoints that each of us believes to be out of place, or out of bounds, in the political process. So it has been since the beginning of the Republic. The Constitution, however, is indifferent to such antipathies. Indeed it virtually guarantees that the unwelcome, the impolitic, and the intrusive will always have a seat at the political table. That religious groups or viewpoints, especially those mobilized on a national scale like the Religious Right, may pose peculiar dangers to our political order is an important concern, but it does not rise to the level of a constitutional concern. The Constitution ultimately entrusts We the People, whether directly or by our representatives, with the final responsibility of judging the propriety and merit of religious activism in the political sphere, no matter how unseemly or unwarranted that activism may be." The same must be said of the propriety and merit of books such as *The Godless Constitution*.

■ "I am a Palestinian," Elias Chacour, a Catholic priest from Galilee, told thousands of Methodists gathered in world conference in Rio de Janeiro. Opening his suit coat, he said, "See, I have no bombs, despite what your media have portrayed me for four decades. I am an Arab Christian, a citizen of Israel. All these facets of my identity are not at peace together. I am crucified." Chacour declared that the Holy Land is being emptied of Christians, and

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Christians elsewhere seem not to care. Christian pilgrims to Israel ignore the indigenous Christians there. "Living stones are more important than holy shrines. Travelers visit the sand and stones, but don't want to share the faith with their brothers and sisters."

■ Separatism breaks out in unlikely places. A Black Ministry Convocation in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, not one of the country's more radical bodies, has voted overwhelmingly for a separate black district (a district is an LCMS diocese, so to speak) because of the "institutional racism" blacks have experienced in the church. Observers say that the resolution was prompted by pique at the LCMS failure to appoint a black as head of the Africa missions desk and doesn't have much chance of approval by the national body. Nonetheless, it is perhaps worth a footnote in somebody's dissertation on the continuingly turbulent state of religion and race relations in America.

■ The *Journal of the American Medical Association* usually has on its cover a reproduction of a work of fine art, with a commentary by Dr. M. Therese Southgate. The cover of the July issue was blank. That, says Dr. Southgate, is because the issue is focused on HIV/AIDS, and she asks readers to consider the "incalculable loss" from the disease—"the loss to all those whose lives would have been touched, even changed, but were not, by books not read because they were never written, by paintings not seen because they were never painted, by performances never heard because the song was not sung." The same issue contains a laudatory review of a book about abortionists, *Doctors of Conscience: The Struggle to Provide Abortion Before and After Roe v. Wade.* Indeed let us consider the incalculable loss to all those whose lives would have been touched, even changed, but were not, by . . .

■ "Common ground" seems to be the in thing these days. It's the title of a little theological (sort of) quarterly that bears the epigraph from Sir Henry Wotton (1568-1639), *Disputandi pruritus ecclesiarum scabies.* Since some parents leave this journal lying around the house where children may see it, we will not translate that. Aimed mainly at readers of the Disciples persuasion, the quarterly bears this warning (or, as the case may be, assurance): "*common ground* is not affiliated with any reputable agency of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)." Readers touched by the scabies of curiosity can get more information by writing P.O. Box 96, Harrodsburg, KY 40330.

■ "The seedbed of our policy-making is a culture that values individualism over community and the accumulation of goods over the common good." From that debatable generalization, Roger Cardinal Mahony of Los Angeles moves to an attack on California's Proposition 209, which would eliminate state affirmative action programs. Citing the standard arguments in support of quotas, he contends that the passage of 209 "would mark a major setback to our nation's tenuous commitment to creating a discrimination-free society." There is no acknowledgment that, in the view of many, a discrimination-free society is one that does not discriminate for or against people on the basis of their race or gender, as quotas certainly do. Cardinal Mahony's statement is hardly unique, but it is a particularly unfortunate instance of political propaganda in the guise of pastoral guidance, the kind of thing that gives religion in public life a bad reputation.

■ With funding from the U.S. Catholic Conference, Hallel Communications of Sparkill, New York, has produced a series of videos on the Catholic experience in America. One is titled *JFK:RC*, and focuses on Kennedy's 1960 address to the Protestant clergy of Houston. The speech, drafted by Theodore Sorenson, is conventionally credited with countering the then-powerful fear of the prospect of a Catholic president. Readers of a certain age will remember some of the key sentences: "I believe in an America where no public official either requests or accepts instruction from the Pope, the National Council of Churches, or any other ecclesiastical source. . . . I believe I'm stating the view of American Catholics from one end of the country to another about the happy relations between church and state." Sheldon Stern, a historian at the JFK Library, says of that speech that Kennedy "didn't overcome the religious issue so much as he was able to project his own attractive personality." That is one way of putting it. In the view of many—a view reinforced by subsequent revelations about his personal life—Kennedy was telling the Houston ministers and the nation that he was not a terribly serious Catholic. The added implication was that religion is a purely private matter that must not be permitted to impinge upon what one does in public office. A case can be made that, for a Catholic to be elected President, that line was necessary at the time. Today, however, those sectors of Protestantism where anti-Catholic bias has traditionally been strongest would likely respond in a very different way. Given the priority of the moral and cultural questions that have redefined contemporary politics, most conservative Protestants might welcome the assurance that a Catholic candidate would take inspiration, if not "instruction," from the pope. As it is said, history has many ironies in the fire.

■ Relations between evangelicals and Catholics are perhaps most tense in Latin America, and within Hispanic communities in this country. So that is where we need to get out the message of "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The

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Christian Mission in the Third Millennium." For a copy of ECT in Spanish, which can be freely reproduced, please write Ms. Davida Goldman here at FT ($2 for postage and handling).

■ *Forbes* magazine calls it the "National Extortion Association." That may be going a bit far, but the National Education Association (NEA), together with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), used teachers' dues to bankroll the Democratic Party to the tune of around $35 million this year. The 30 percent of NEA members who report they are Republicans have no say in the matter. In the recent election cycle, 99.1 percent of NEA political action committee funding and 98.6 percent of AFT PAC monies went to Democrats. The *Detroit News* editorializes: "The teachers unions' partisanship is so pronounced they make the much-vilified Tobacco Institute and the National Rifle Association—which have given 78.3 percent and 80.1 percent of their PAC funds, respectively, to Republican candidates—look wildly bipartisan." What the unions get in return is political protection of their monopoly on government education dollars, a monopoly threatened by the prospect of parental choice. Parental choice in general, and Catholic schools in particular, got a big boost when Mayor Giuliani of New York took Cardinal O'Connor up on his long-standing offer to accept a thousand of the poorest and most problem-ridden children in the public schools, those performing in the bottom five percentile. The Mayor was frustrated in his hope of using government money for the experiment, but corporations and individuals came to the rescue. Union defenders of the status quo complained that the money should be given to the public schools, but almost nobody has confidence that even billions of additional dollars could remedy the catastrophically dysfunctional public system. In fact, it is more likely that more money would only deepen the rot. We're talking big time stakes here. New York State alone spends $25 billion per year on the government schools. The desperation of the unions is understandable. With respect to the teachers and their dues, "National Extortion Association" may be right, but even greater sympathy is warranted for the parents, and especially the children, who suffer under the present system. Education used to be the way out of poverty. In our big cities today, it is one of the chief factors locking children into poverty. Which is one very sensible reason why the majority of teachers in the big city systems do not send their own children to the public schools. I'm editorially prejudiced, of course, but I think one of the very best things ever written on this subject is John Coons' "School Choice as Simple Justice" (FT, April 1992). You might think about suggesting it for the next meeting of your discussion group.

■ Oh, what a tangled web we weave. In Racine County, Wisconsin, Deborah Zimmerman is charged with attempted homicide because she tried to kill her baby by alcohol poisoning. Two days before labor was to be induced, she went out and got stone cold absolutely dead drunk. According to the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, "What makes the case so unusual is that if Zimmerman's baby had been stillborn, she could not have been charged with attempted homicide because it would have been considered an abortion, said Racine County Assistant District Attorney Joan Korb." Ms. Zimmerman just had the legal misfortune of giving birth to a healthy baby. Defense attorney Sally Hoelzel takes a different line: "My contention is that at the time of the alleged acts of my client, the fetus was not a human being and could not be a victim." Prosecutor Korb observes, "People will want to look at it as a woman's right to do with her body as she pleases prior to the birth of the child. But our position is that it has consequences to the child if it's born alive." The article does not address the legalities of killing a child as it is being born, as in partial-birth abortion. In the 220th year of the independence of this great nation, that is countenanced by what is known as the rule of law.

■ A concurrent resolution of Congress, even when unanimously adopted, does not have the force of law. But it is very good that the House and Senate did it. The resolution was introduced September 17 by Senator John McCain of Arizona, and is titled "Condemning Human Rights Abuses and Denials of Religious Liberty." While affirming the rights of all believers, it focuses on the persecution of Christians who are "victimized by a 'religious apartheid' that subjects them to inhumane, humiliating treatment, and, in certain cases, are imprisoned, tortured, enslaved, or killed." The resolution cites John Paul II on "the most fundamental human freedom, that of practicing one's faith openly," which is a person's "reason for living." Among the countries named in the Senate resolution are Sudan, Cuba, Saudi Arabia, China, Pakistan, North Korea, Egypt, Laos, and Vietnam. The Clinton State Department has been notoriously lax in pressing the question of religious persecution, especially where Christians are involved, and the resolution calls on the President to "expand and invigorate" this country's advocacy of religious freedom and to "initiate a thorough examination of all U.S. policies that affect persecuted Christians." While a unanimous resolution is not law, we are told that pertinent legislation is in the works. Persecuted Christians around the world are puzzled and disheartened by what they perceive, with good reason, as the indifference of American Christians to their suffering brothers and sisters. Many people are to be credited for recent efforts to challenge this scandalous indifference, but we note especially the relentless labor of Michael Horowitz of the Hudson

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Institute and Nina Shea of the Puebla Institute, plus the splendid "Statement of Conscience and Call to Action" adopted earlier this year by the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). We confess to being somewhat puzzled that other institutions, including the National Council of Churches and the Catholic bishops conference, have not publicly joined in the NAE initiative. It surely cannot be that the U.S. Congress is more concerned about the persecution of Christians than are some churches.

■ Please, I take it back. Some months ago a comment on plagiarism was titled, "He who steals my words . . ." In response to a reader who complained that the title itself was semi-plagiarized, I rather snippily said that anyone who didn't recognize the Shakespeare reference shouldn't be reading the journal. We now have a bundle of letters from readers who said they didn't recognize it and ask whether I'm saying that they should stop reading. No, no, no. It was written toward the end of a difficult day. Even Homer nods (as Horace said of a much worthier scribe).

■ There is always the question of fairness. When you criticize others, are you accurately representing their views? One is grateful, therefore, when they themselves state their position with unmistakable candor. Kevin M. Cathcart is one of the head honchos of the formidably well-orchestrated legal campaign to advance the homosexual agenda. As executive director of the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, he offers in the *New York Times* a concise statement of his understanding of democracy. "Democracy is not supposed to depend on opinion polls or legislative approval," he writes. "Strategic concerns are critical for the lesbian and gay civil rights movement, but they include choosing where as well as what battles are fought." In getting the Supreme Court to overrule the people of Colorado on homosexual rights, and in pressing for same-sex marriage in Hawaii, Lambda "is using the courts and the Constitution to expand and protect our rights." "Strategically, gay people have found far more success in the courts than in Congress." There you have it. Democracy is government by judges rather than by the people through their elected representatives. Is that a fair presentation of Lambda's position? Its leader says so. In the same statement he says that "the Supreme Court struck down Colorado's anti-gay Amendment 2 in *Romer v. Evans*, and ruled that under the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, homophobia cannot be made into law," and he observes that "that principle may be used to challenge the misnamed Defense of Marriage Act, should it become law." In signaling Lambda's legal strategy in challenging the effort by Congress to deny federal recognition to same-sex marriage, Mr. Cathcart takes a small liberty in his interpretation of the *Romer* decision, but it is a very small liberty. The Supreme Court did not explicitly say that "homophobia" cannot be made into law. It did say that disapproval of homosexuality reflects an irrational animus, and disapproval of homosexuality in any form whatever is what gay activists mean by homophobia. So Lambda and its allies are quite right to believe that, in getting the government to declare that millennia of classical, Jewish, and Christian teaching on homosexuality is nothing more than prejudice, "gay people have found far more success in the courts than in Congress"—or in any other institution with a measure of accountability to the American people. Those who are surprised that this position is presented as a defense of democracy have perhaps not been paying close attention to the judiciary's now long-standing repeal of the principle, "government by the consent of the governed."

■ Reviewing a batch of evangelical books on dogmatic theology (May), Carl Braaten, a Lutheran, didn't like at all Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*. He said, "Grudem completely ignores the post-Enlightenment tradition" and exhibits "a blithe indifference to critical scholarship" in his use of Scripture. Dr. Grudem of Trinity Divinity School, Deerfield, Ill., takes strong exception. He notes that his book has hundreds of references to post-Enlightenment authors, albeit evangelical authors who reject the Enlightenment. As for indifference to critical scholarship, he admits to giving "scant attention to scholars whose anti-supernatural presuppositions and entrenched historical skepticism make them poor guides to understanding a Bible that is both thoroughly supernatural and absolutely reliable." So it turns out that his indifference, far from being blithe, is most determined.

■ 1998 is the fiftieth anniversary of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the big assembly was scheduled for Harare, Zimbabwe. Then it was pointed out that Zimbabwe's laws are not kindly disposed toward sodomy and related sexual activities. President Robert Mugabe has gone so far as to compare homosexual acts with animal behavior. There was some agitation in the WCC to find a new site for the assembly, but general secretary Konrad Raiser says that a change "would mean almost total loss of credibility" for the WCC among African churches (over seventy member churches are in Africa). The WCC and Zimbabwe have signed a "memorandum of understanding" that commits the WCC to advising its participants "not to indulge in any act that is in contravention of the laws of Zimbabwe." The implication is that the government, in turn, will not look too closely at what WCC participants are doing in their bedrooms. Not everyone is happy with the memorandum. For

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instance, Paul Sherry of the United Church of Christ in the USA notes that "some of us" might want to engage in nonviolent acts of protest in keeping with church tradition. One can hear it now: "Would you like to engage in a nonviolent act of protest?"

■ The line between the careful and the craven is not always clear. But clearly a recent directive from the United States Catholic Conference (USCC) crawls across the line toward the craven. In September the USCC put out "voter education" material listing the responses of Clinton and Dole to a wide range of questions on subjects as various as abortion, environment, land mines, foreign aid, and labor relations. The material comes with an ever-so-cautious introduction from USCC legal counsel indicating that it "meets IRS criteria" for literature that "avoids violation of the Section 501(c)(3) prohibition against political campaign activity." So bishops and priests are directed that the material must be distributed in its entirety; there must be no editorial comment regarding candidates or their responses; and there must be "no discussion of the questions presented in the questionnaire or of any position of the church on such questions," etc. The answers given by Dole and Clinton (Perot didn't respond) are familiar, so the questionnaire contained nothing that the reasonably well-informed citizen would not already know. The interesting thing is that a hyper-nervous legal counsel tries to gag church leaders who just might want to point out that a candidate's position on, say, abortion or school choice is somewhat more determinative than his position on family farms or the minimum wage. Why on earth should the Catholic Church spinelessly conform its educational efforts to "meet IRS criteria"? With respect to the free exercise of religion, the Church should be pushing the envelope, not safely hunkering down to stay within government dictates. Most humiliating to the Church is the prohibition on discussing church teachings in connection with the questionnaire. The Church to the state, hat in hand and tugging its forelock: "Is there anything else we should not do, Sire, in order to stay in your good graces?" Paul to Timothy: "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control." But of course Paul only faced the prospect of martyrdom and knew nothing of the terror of threatened tax exemption. The leadership of apostles gives way to the rule of lawyers. We would like to think that bishops had the good sense to junk the worthless questionnaire in favor of proclaiming the Church's message "in season and out of season"—no matter whether it ruffled the feathers of the IRS or gave an ulcer to USCC experts on the legal niceties of ecclesiastical pusillanimity.

■ Why do you ask? Of course we'll be carrying a major review of *His Holiness: John Paul II and the Hidden History of Our Time* by Marco Politi and Carl Bernstein (the latter, with Bob Woodward, of "deep throat" fame). The Oliver Stoning of history is not only of interest to the stoned. Politi is a leader of the journalistic horde of Italian vatacanisti or professional Pope-watchers. These are the wonderful people who brought you the news, at least eighty-seven times in the last eighteen years, that John Paul II is on his death bed. One of these years they will be right about that, but, on the basis of my own observation, that is likely a long time off. More on the book later, however. For the moment, I note an interview with Politi in which he laments that this Pope is not as progressive as he and his colleagues would like. For the Church, he said, "the issues are the same as 20 years ago." I should certainly hope so, although the sentence is missing two zeros.

■ "We all live in such rigid confines of male and female, like there's a great divide that separates us. Men who are feminine and women who are masculine suffer because of it. I'm really sorry that this is an issue in this day and time." The speaker is Erin Swenson, a man who was a Presbyterian minister in Atlanta. He divorced his wife of twenty-seven years and underwent what the Atlanta paper calls "sex-reassignment surgery." An intriguing idea, sex as assignment. Erin insisted on his/her right to play in the women's tennis league. The dispute was settled when the head of the tennis association determined that Erin had a driver's license that indicated she/he is female. "Officials concluded that a person the State of Georgia recognizes as a woman is eligible for its women's leagues." Denied recognition as a minister by the Atlanta presbytery, Erin now works as "a psychotherapist in private practice specializing in gender-identity issues." Confused about your gender identity? Just check your driver's license. Unless you subscribe to the "rigid confines of male and female" and think you need a new assignment. We should all be really sorry that "this is an issue in this day and time." Really sorry.

■ "Tacky." That was one editor's response to the idea that FT should carry classified ads. Being as how we're a very democratic outfit, the Editor-in-Chief cast the majority vote against him. Many FT readers, we expect, would welcome an economical and convenient way to let other readers know about job openings, conferences, research projects, things to sell, or whatever. (No "personals," please. This isn't the *New York Review of Books*.) For information on how to place your ad, contact Richard Vaughan at Publishing Management Associates, 129 Phelps Avenue, Suite 312, Rockford, IL 61108. Phone: (815) 398-8569; Fax: (815) 398-8579.

■ Of the many books and tracts now appearing on how to replace our catastrophic welfare system, a

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little book edited by James L. Payne is worthy of note, *The Befriending Leader: Social Assistance Without Dependency* (Lytton Publishing, Sandpoint, Ohio). The book is composed of essays by Octavia Hill, a remarkable social worker in Victorian England whose methods were widely imitated in this country. But even very good books have their distracting moments. In the introduction, we are told that Ms. Hill operated not by rules and regulations but by befriending those who needed help. "She conversed with them, read poetry to them, led them in singing, took them on outings, taught them to prepare nutritious lunches (with white tablecloth and proper manners). Before long, the children were eating out of her hand." Table manners were different in those days.

■ If you read the back of the journal first, you might send us that list of potential subscribers before moving on to the main articles. Just a thought.

■ Already the editorials and sermons are upon us bemoaning the commercialization of Christmas. But, once again, what is commercialization except giving and receiving in exchanges of generosity and conviviality? To be sure, anything can be done to excess, but one should not protest too much when excess is on the side of good intentions—or at least of intentions that we feel obliged to construe as good. Finally, however, the so-called spirit of the season does come down to the truth of the matter. John Betjeman got it right:

And is it true? For if it is,
No loving fingers tying strings
Around those tissued fripperies,
The sweet and silly Christmas things,
Bath salts and inexpensive scent
And hideous tie so kindly meant.

No love that in a family dwells,
No carolling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this single Truth compare —
That God was Man in Palestine
And lives today in Bread and Wine.

And in you. And in me.

A blessed Christmas, and may the new year be filled with grace and glory for you and yours.

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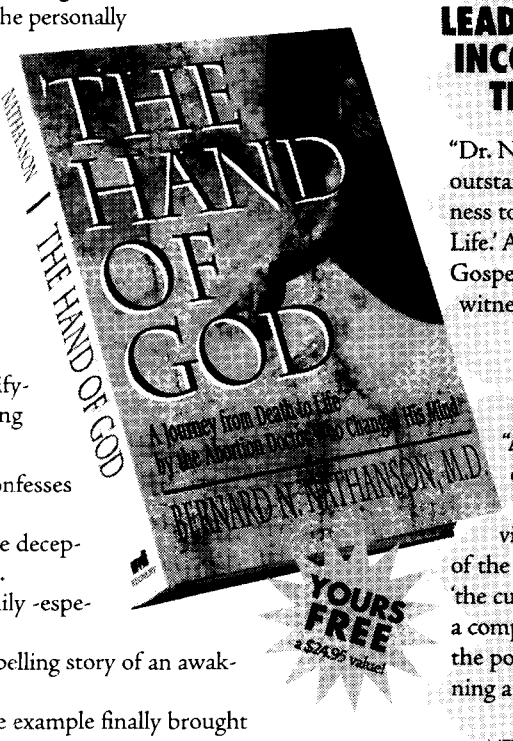
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